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To MY SON,

To MY "ENGLISH MOTHER,"

To HELEN THOMAS, LUCY THOMPSON, FLORENCE CROCKER, VIVIAN EDWARDS,

To "MR. CORNFLOWER,"

AND

To ALL MY OTHER ENGLISH FRIENDS,

WHO, ON VARIOUS OCCASIONS AND IN VARIOUS DEGREES, BUT WITH INVARIABLE INTEREST, SO DELIGHTFULLY HELPED ME IN MANY PROBLEMS OF TRANSLATING THE RUSSIAN POEMS

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PREFACE

MADAME JARINTZOV in her former book* made me and every student of Russian her debtor. She expounded for us, she realized as only a Russian could, the Russian spirit. Now she goes further; by her translations she recreates that spirit. She has done me the honour to ask from me a few words of preface, and with singular pleasure I own myself, in this matter of translation, her convert and her disciple.

Her theory of translation—if the word "theory" can be used of a method and spirit so pliant—is original and even subversive. No one knows better than Madame Jarintzov that the perfect translation is impossible, almost a contradiction in terms. The essence of a poem is not a medieval soul, to be transferred at will from body to body; still less is it a body to do on and do off at discretion strange raiment. If we are to keep the colour, the flavour, the life, the lilt of the one language, the other must suffer. Which is it to be?

Hitherto among translators a kind of orthodoxy has become traditional. The translator translates from an alien idiom. He, it is assumed, is past-master of his own tongue, and must guard its sanctities; if violence be done, it is the alien idiom that must suffer. Madame Jarintzov frankly turns the tables on

* *The Russians and their Language*, Blackwell, 1916.

tradition. If Russian is to be translated, the translator must be a Russian. He and he only can really feel his mother-tongue, its rhymes and rhythms, its complex music, its rather stark stateliness. The translator's object is, not to create English, but to carry over Russian.

"By their fruits ye shall know them"—and we are not afraid for Madame Jarintzov. The timid critic need not fear the torment of tormented English. Some slight contortions he must nerve himself to face, some few words and phrases that no English hand would have written, but he will be repaid full-measure.

Let him read Pùshkin's *Bronze Horseman*. He will feel the broad swell of the Neva and see the splendid spectral vision of Peter's great new city shining in the northern night. Above all, let him read *The Demon* of L'èrmontov. A line like

"By swords of passionless Archangels"

may well live on in English literature. *The Demon* is a masterpiece of translation, charged with the unearthly beauty of the original—yes, and with something of its timeless terror.

As we write comes the glorious news of Russia's revolution. Peter's "window on the west" opens wide at last, never again to close. *E Borea lux*, and we greet Madame Jarintzov as harbinger of dawn.

JANE HARRISON.

NEWNHAM COLLEGE,
CAMBRIDGE,
March 10, 1917

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INTRODUCTION

BEFORE everything else, I must warn my reader that this book is not an academic kind of work. It does not contain a study of the whole of Russian poetry, nor does it deal with the ancient folk-epic, nor with the first dawn of the modern verse-world—*i.e.*, the pseudo-classical ode-writing. It only shows the main landmarks in the traditions of Russian poetry, since the poetry of individual genius superseded the folk creations.

It is not an academic study—Firstly, because a fundamental research work has been long ago offered to the English literary world in the form of Mr. Walishevski's formidable volume *Russian Literature*. The first part of that book, dealing with the early springs of our poetry, is its best part, too. Lately this study has been further supplemented by the excellent little volume on Russian literature by Prince P. Kropotkin, and another by Mr. Maurice Baring.

Secondly, because I could not write in a scholarly, systematic style, even if I wanted to do so: it is far beyond my capacity.

Thirdly, because I do not want to. Those who are constantly in my mental vision while I write are—

1. The *wide* world of the intelligent English reading public who have no time for scholarly reading, but who would like to get a general clear view of the world of Russian poetry—as one gets of a country district when standing on the top of a small isolated hill: all the main points stand out to one's view in their individual outlines, although the horizon thus covered is by no means the widest one could get.

2. The Russians! . . . If most of them, knowing English and having read my translations, will say—Хорошó (" Well

done): *it sounds Russian!*"—then my life was worth living, even if it were for that one achievement.

I am afraid that the theorists and systematists among the English poets and poetry critics come last into my consideration (I shall explain why presently). This is very impracticable, I am afraid; but, still, most important to me remains the opinion of the general English public with a heart and an ear for what is poetic, human, and in this case new; and I hope that my simple talk about the best-beloved of our poets, as these appear to one of many Russian minds, will be interesting to many in this country, and not to specialists only.

Not all the good Russian poets of last century are discussed in this volume: Màykov and Polònski might be included amongst the classics (but not Nadson, although his personal, sympathetic little lyrics, like those of Ella Wheeler Wilcox, were extremely popular in the eighties and after).

That Russian literature is permeated with sadness is taken for granted by Europeans, and it is not within my scope to lay a special stress on this; on the contrary, I enjoy the possibility of showing that there is fervent humour, sincere frolic, crispness and bracing breeziness, and a charm of whimsical simplicity in it as well. And I do not think that the English public, a little tired of studying the intensity and the everlasting throbbing of Dostoyèvski, Gor'ki, and Andrèyev, should be displeased to come across the sparkling gems created by the pen of Pùshkin, Al'exèy Tolstòy, or Fet. On the whole, the Muse of Russian poetry has yearned, condemned, mourned, wondered, philosophized, and, lately, searched in the regions of the Unknown, much more than she has enjoyed herself in dreaming and smiling. But the more precious are her smiles, I think!

Before I say more about my venture to add poetry samples to the prose appreciations, I cannot help adding a few lines with regard to Mr. Walishevski's *Russian Literature*. This Polish writer leaves me with the impression that he has taken every possible care not to leave out a single man or woman of second of third rate importance who have the least right of claiming a place in the literature of Russia,

while at the same time he has an obvious tendency to find faults, drawbacks, lack of originality and lack of genius, with nearly every one of the greatest men: thus, nearly a hundred literary people appear levelled by his interpretation. This tendency leads him so far that he ignores Al'exèy Tolstòy as a poet altogether, which is astonishing in a book meant to be a complete review of Russian literature and certainly revealing enormous erudition and a supremacy in painstaking, first-hand research work.

It must appear either an appalling conceit or else a self-contradiction on my part to undertake translating Russian poetry after I have tried to show in *The Russians and their Language* that *most of the essentially Russian speech is untranslatable. So it is*, and my audacity astonishes myself! To translate Russian poetry, preserving its meaning, phrasing, character of speech, and musical lilt, combined—is impossible. The English language presents three terrible stumbling-blocks for every translator who is Russian in his mind and in his blood: One is, the absence in English of all the all-important, meaning-full twists and turns we give to our nouns, verbs, adjectives, and even adverbs. The second is, the shortage of ordinary, simple, yet beautiful long words which permeate the Russian speech with dactyls (— ⏑ ⏑). And the third is, the thimbleful of English rhymes! . . .

Struggling with these stumbling-blocks, one unavoidably comes to the problem: Which would do more justice to the Russian originals: (1) rephrasing them to such an extent that they would turn into reproachless English, just giving the general idea of each poem—or (2) trying to keep, *as far as possible*, the Russian lilt and the atmosphere of phrasing?

Personally I came to my decision in less than no time: my Russian ear simply cannot stand that English polishing which shrivels up all that rings and calls to us in the lines of our poets. And *I decided to make this book an experiment*: (*a*) to make it clear to myself *how much* of the Russian poetic speech is translatable into English at all; and (*b*) to show to the English reader the channels through which the Russian

poetic mind works, and let him have an insight into the sphere of Russian versification. To open quite wide the door into that hall of Russian thought where the finest looms are working is impossible, because the prism of the English language is filling in the doorway; but, as much as this sharp-cut, crystal-hard prism does allow, the reader might see the work in progress. The Notes and Explanations at the end of the book will be of considerable help, I hope, and this book may thus turn out to be the woof to the warp of *The Russians and their Language*, in which the psychological channels and the technique of Russian prose are discussed.

But, concerning my experiment of translating poetry on rather new lines, with a disregard to any hard-and-fast systems, the voices of the English public alone will show me its value or its futility. I shall listen to those living voices, both condemning and appreciative. They will decide the fate of the second volume: whether I ought to continue giving the nearest possible "Russian-in-English" verse for Russian verse, or to give up my personal enjoyment in doing so, and have it all polished according to all the demands of English poetry. My first and foremost judge, the English reader, will either tell me (will you, please?) whether there is anything living and attractive which conveys to him the Russian breath in my translations; or, I hope, he will call out equally sincerely: "Hang it all, that Russian swing and atmosphere of yours! and give me proper poetry."

The two main tests for him to go by will be L'èrmontov's *Demon* and all the poems by Al'exèy Tolstòy and Fet: none of these have gone through the hands of Mr. Wilfred Blair (of whom my reader will presently hear).

Mr. Maurice Baring says: "Jukòvski is the first and best translator in European literature, for what Krylòv did with some of La Fontaine's fables, he did for all the literature he touched—he recreated it in Russian and made it his own . . . Jukòvski did what all other translators of Homer have done: he took the Homer out (of the *Odyssey*), and left the Jukòvski."

This is one of the two acknowledged systems of trans-

lating, and many have followed it since Jukôvski's days. Yet I am sure that, if a literary man of *ancient Greece* should magically turn up amongst us with the purpose of interpreting Homer in modern English or Russian, *he would before everything else try to preserve the Homer* in the *Odyssey*.

My idea is just this: that in translating from any foreign language into your mother-tongue you are naturally tempted to remould, and even to "improve," the originals in more than one way, as the national aspirations bid you; whereas in translating the beloved literary creations of your own country into a foreign language, you naturally try every possible means in order to convey the character of the original unimpaired.

I have already once suggested to the English writers who know Russian: Why don't they write a book for us Russians, in Russian, about *England?* This would certainly give a chance to our masses to understand her properly.

But no one has paid the least attention to that suggestion; while every three-months stay of an Englishman in Russia results in *another* English book about Russia's "soul" or "true springs," or his "Russian friends," or something of that kind.

Perhaps presently some of these literary English people will translate for us English poets into Russian? This would give us pure Wordsworth for Wordsworth, Tennyson for Tennyson, Keats for Keats, Shelley for Shelley, etc., without the Russian aspirations blown into them. As it is, in spite of the extraordinary flexibility of the Russian language, our translators do not apply this luxurious means, but usually rebuild Western poetry so that it becomes exquisite, but decidedly *Russian*, poetry. (This does not refer to Pûshkin's own creations, such as *Imitations of Dante* or *Imitations of the Koran;* these, on the contrary, sound so, as if they were perfect, ideal translations.) I call this unfair. I would abhor the idea of making "my own" poems in the place of those the *original* character of which I am longing to convey! The Russians who do not know English have no idea of the differences between Russian and English versification, because in our translations, with a few exceptions by the

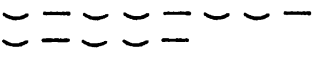
pen of some great poets, the English spirit of speech and the English metres are turned into Russian ones. I am well aware of the theory which states that this is the right thing to do—*i.e.*, that perfection of the language into which a poem is translated is the only way of conveying its genuine character. Very well, let it be perfect, as far as the comparative phrasing of the two languages allows; *but why not be faithful to the original metre and to the nature of rhyming as well?* One can well excuse exceptional cases when a really great poet retells a foreign poem so that it becomes an absolute, though new, pearl of beauty in its new warm flesh. But I wonder how the English poets would regard the typical English metres—with the best-beloved beat on the *last* syllable of each line, and with the "strong" *single* rhymes—turned into dactyls, and, in any case, lavishly provided with "weak" *double* rhymes? . . .

To my mind and ear, such a deliberate handling robs every poem of all its original character; and, unless the translator is a first-rate poet to whose individual genius *re*-creations must be now and again permitted, *a complete faithfulness to every metre should be the absolute condition of every translation in verse.*

In any case, the Something, the "je-ne-sais-quoi" of the Russian poetry is entirely lost when our typical lilts of three-syllable metres, or even the universal *long* rhymes alone, are deliberately replaced by two-syllable metres and by an unbroken succession of *short* rhymes, in order to suit the English language. And yet this is just what is constantly done in those attempts to translate Russian poetry across which one occasionally comes nowadays. The little book of *Russian Songs and Lyrics* translated by Mr. John Pollen and containing over a hundred poems declares them, in its under-title, to be "faithful translations." . . . I am not intending to pick to pieces each line of the booklet, as I think that every translator (especially from the Russian) is bound to develop a different phrasing; but, only about ten poems of the whole lot are given in original metres! Of these ten, L'èrmontov's *Dispute* is not only by far the best, but a really good translation: it "sounds Russian," it

conveys the genuine atmosphere of speech and spirit. The *Clouds* would have followed suit if one half of the dactyl rhymes (which are very important in a poem written in unimpeachable dactyls throughout) had not been given up.

Why did Mr. John Pollen, once that he was able to achieve a very good result in the *Dispute*, neglect the nature of the remaining hundred odd poems? As they are, they do not sound Russian at all, with their altered metres, shortened lines, and the un-Russian monotony of the beat falling on the last syllable of each line. I am sorry to be obliged to point out that the original swing of L'èrmontov's *Angel*, *Elegy*, and *Dagger*, and N'ekràsov's *Te Deum*, are absolutely beyond any recognition, especially the *Angel*: its gracefully grave amphibrach



is turned into a polka! . . . If you want to judge about this metamorphosis without knowing Russian, here is a parallel: Try to put a chorus from *Atalanta in Calydon* into the swing of—

> "Old King Cole was a merry old soul,
> And a merry old soul was he.
> He called for his pipe, he called for his bowl,
> And he called for his fiddlers three"—

or the sounds of the first movement of the *Moonlight Sonata* into the metre of this little tune!

It is not a bit difficult to give such a merciless twist to any musical rhythm: you can easily turn the *Funeral March* into a polka or a valse, without altering the succession of the melody-notes or changing any chords in it: but what will there be left of the music of the originals? "Who can be happy and free in Russia?"—a translation of N'ekràsov's epic poem, by Juliet M. Soskice—does not convey the national stateliness of the dactylled lilt at all. So far, the best amongst the translations from Russian poetry are to be found in the volume, *The Soul of Russia*, edited by Miss W. Stephens, in the *Six Lyrics*, (see p. 159), and in *The New Age*.

It is exceedingly difficult to master the main character

features of Russian versification within the boundaries of the English language—in certain cases quite impossible! But I think that *we*, who are not great poets, *should never even set to work over a translation of a Russian poem into English, if the main flow of it has not burst forth from our mind straight away in the exact lilt and swing of the original.*

That is why, in my opinion, *the first start and the bulk of work* in translating poetry should be in the hands of one in whose mother-tongue it has been originally written: *he* is much more likely to have . . . a kind of inspiration emanating from the lines the music of which had been sounding in his ears since early youth. His, too, is the right of judgment when it comes to the last filigree touches of the work. But there is one stage in between, and that is where the important help of "the foreigner" comes in. By far the least interesting part of the work, I am sure! and those English friends of mine to whom this book is dedicated simply amazed me with the interest they evinced in this ungrateful business. How many a time I would hasten to one or another of them with this or that poem, vehemently and indignantly declaring that there were "no rhymes to be got in English!"—or that it was impossible to squeeze all the necessary Russian into this or that stanza—or that the only obtainable modern English terms were no good for all these beautiful poetic Old Russian varieties of words! . . .

My dear literary friends would sadly admit it all at first, seldom venturing on a half-hearted defence of the possibilities afforded by the English language. . . . I would hear the unexpected but capital remark, that "Nothing ever follows in English!" or, "One gets hopelessly tied up when one thinks about the English metres!" . . . But we would set to think together, and, mostly, a rhyme correct in meaning would be found (although at the cost of a twist to the phrase), and the Russian sentences would be squeezed in, and the roughness of my English would be smoothed here and there—and sometimes "everywhere!"

Yes, this book owes ever so much to these wonderful friends of mine who understand the eagerness which carries

me from everything else back to this fascinating problem-of-a-work. . . .

But the lion's share of the technical part of Englishing my verse translations fell on the young English poet, Mr. Wilfrid Blair, as I first met him when the book was almost going to the press. His mastery of English versification showed me how much better one could say many things which were said more or less well before. He, too, taught me how much more close to the original one could be in some places than I thought it possible. Without him Kol'tzòv would never get all his dactyls, and without him L'èrmontov's *Duma* would have remained untranslated altogether. Also an enormous amount of improvement came from Mr. Wilfrid Blair to my Pûshkin, Jukòvski, T'ùtchev, and N'ekràsov's poem *When I the Horrors Read of War*. Altogether, my thanks to Mr. Wilfrid Blair are sincere and great.

But, besides his actual help, our bit of co-operation was so delightfully exciting! We had many a lively debate. More than once, when I would say that this or that couple of lines had to be rephrased because the original twist of the phrase was untranslatable, he would ask: "What is the original word by word? Tell me." On hearing the nearest possible approach to it, he would exclaim, "O-oh, I see!"—and would give me his "exact" version, which, he thought, was just perfect. But, irreverently unsatisfied, I would show it to another *most literary* young English person who is keenly interested in the success of this book. . . . "And what is the original word by word?" he would ask. I would repeat it to him. "O-oh, I see!"—would exclaim my interesting and interested friend, and would suggest *his* version—quite a different one! Then we had either to work out a compromise between us all, or I would insist on my own original version, and take its sins upon myself; and on these occasions my two cherished advisers declared that they were "not answerable" for them.

On the other hand, *I* am not answerable for a good many places where they have made me give in! So we are square. And if some critics will single out some words or lines from the translations, and will gravely dish them up for us in

special paragraphs as revelations of wrongs, it will be tremendous sport for us to see whose versions these bits are.

I am sure that, if I could hear from every one of the critics his particular correction of any of the mistakes, and if I could pass it on to the next one, every "next one" would say, "O-oh, I see!"—and would give *his* correct phrasing.

No other branch of art work is so limited on all sides as translating poetry; and each human brain will apply its individual creative power in instinctively bending the bonds in its own way. It is like being within a place surrounded by an adjustable fencing: you *can* curve the light walls of the stringed narrow planks, which are not fixed in the ground, even when the corner posts remain unmoved.

Mr. Wilfrid Blair believes in a word-for-word translation, and thinks that "it only needs time" and can be achieved in every case within the laws of perfect English, and yet combined with the original metre, original rhyming scheme, *and* original atmosphere of speech. *I don't!* The impossibility of this has become particularly clear to me since the great debate between Mr. Wilfrid Blair and myself over L'èrmontov's *Demon*. On being given the word-for-word English for that poem, Mr. Wilfrid Blair said that he "could not possibly pass" my translation, as it "needed several months of work to correct it." I, on the other hand, could not possibly pass the line or two which he suggested as his own version, so we left this poem alone. Thus, all the *Demon's* sins are now *my sins; but so is the "Demon's" Russian swing!* The fact is that *the knowledge of the exact meaning of each separate word does not give a foreign translator, who knows no Russian, the feeling of the original musical lilt*—not in the least. The *Demon* is one of those classical creations which are permeated with the typical, essential beauty of classical Russian poetry *—namely, the stateliness of simplicity, the naturalness of speech which could not be beaten by the most perfect prose.* The moment the English poetic language steps in with its very own licences, out flies the great spirit of that stately naturalness! . . .

Therefore, my English readers and critics—those who really know Russian—when you occasionally come in my *Demon* across an omitted or an added word, or a stopgap, or a phrasing which increases or abbreviates the number of lines—*try to do it yourself:* you will soon see that, improving my English on your own lines, and trying to be at the same time still closer to the original, you will strangely drift away from the essential nature of the Russian verse; while the Russian people knowing English will soon excuse me the few bits of unpunctuality, because *they will feel* the original simplicity reflected in the whole of the work, and will realize that it is not always the perfection of the foreign speech, nor even the absolute exactness of the words, that conveys that individual Something! . . . Nothing can be easier than shrivelling it up by means of English rendering.

No system whatever can be applied to the translating from the Russian into English wholesale. Various conceptions and twists of phrases which are living embodiments of the natural in Russian very often are appalling artificiality in English; and what is poetic in English is very often "made up" or sentimental in Russian. Every poem sometimes every line commands a different handling.

In some places, the speech of the original lends itself to translation almost word by word, carrying its atmosphere with it; but, most Russian phrases take more room than the equivalent English ones do, and there remain gaps which have got to be filled in—if you do follow, of course, the exact Russian rhythm so that no line may have extra syllables attached to it, nor any omitted. Then the question arises: Is it advisable to drag out the English sentence, or would this be unlike the speech of the original? And, if not advisable, *what* English word should be used as a stopgap in this particular place? what epithets are there which this particular poet might have used here? . . . I am afraid that only a compatriot of the poet can be a final judge in these details, the subtlety of which is more important, to my mind, than even the purely stylistic technique.

Here is a seemingly trifling but really a good illustration of what I mean:

One of L'èrmontov's short poems begins in Russian with the impersonal verb (or adverb) which is acknowledged to be absent from the English speech: (и) скýчно. It is derived from the same idea as the French *ennui*, and we apply it, quite by itself, when we find everything around hopelessly boring. Now, you cannot possibly begin a meditation in English by saying "And boring and sad" (which is word-for-word literal), without saying *what* is boring and sad; nor even by, "And dreary and sad"; so I thought it right to interpret these two adverbs opening the first line of the original—И скýчно и грýстно—by three English nouns, placing them in the second line, as the rhythm commanded: "All's solitude, dulness and sadness" (p. 206). The word "solitude" is a stopgap—but solitude is the keynote of all L'èrmontov's poetry. Now, Mr. John Pollen begins this poem by, "How weary! how dreary!" . . . That is just the point: in spite of his two adjectives being in the right place and seeming to be equivalents to the Russian terms, they are not. L'èrmontov does not pitifully complain of life in the form of exclamations, with *signs* of exclamations to boot: he just states the facts in a dry, hopelessly quiet tone; everything is to him boring and dull as a matter of course, and the poem is never read in Russian with dramatically uplifted intonations, but absolutely simply, like good serious prose. As to L'èrmontov himself, it is quite impossible to imagine him exclaiming, "*How* weary! *how* dreary!" My reader will understand this when he has read all the prose part about this poet, who might have seemed to some a romantic mourner, but, in fact, was something quite different. . . . The tone of unavoidable realism is as necessary in reading his works as grasping "the other end of the stick" is—*i.e.*, his psychology.

Another instance: "Lethe" was suggested to me as an obviously logical stopgap in connection with oblivion. But my adviser did not know that L'èrmontov never used mythological terms; the dear old gods and their entourage never entered his mind at all: they were nonentities of no poetic value to him.

Unfortunately, neither the system of free translation nor

the word-for-word one can help when it comes to the numberless cases of old, poetic, and biblically-poetic varieties of Russian words. In my preceding book I have discussed at length the part of the Old Slavonic in the modern Russian; the richness of our vocabulary is greatly due to that ever-young element which will never die out, because a number of the Old Slavonic forms are blended into one sparkling wave of poetic hues with the essentially Russian folk-expressions. Just a few examples (which are not amongst those given in *The Russians and their Language*).

The trees of Eden are with us not trees, дере́вья, but quite a special thing: ку́щи. The cup of life, or of suffering, is not a "cup," ча́шка, but a much more grave and poetic kind of a cup: ча́ша; it would be ridiculous and absurd in Russian to think of a ча́шка of life! . . . Again, the dust into which human flesh turns after death is not the same "dust" as the street-dust; it is прахъ, and not пыль, and there is an adjective of an independent root going with this conception as well: бре́нный. The face of God, and any holy face, is not the ordinary лицо́, but ликъ. "Hope" has a selection of two forms, in the same way: наде́жда and упова́ніе; "pride" has three: го́рдость, горды́ня, and спѣсь; "palace" has two: дворе́цъ and черто́гъ; "head" has two: голова́ and глава́; "lips" has two: гу́бы and уста́; "finger" has two: па́лецъ and пе́рстъ; "hand" has two: рука́ and десни́ца; "palm of the hand" has two: ладо́нь and длань; "cheeks" has two: щёки and ланиты; "darkness" in the Biblical sense is not the ordinary darkness, темнота́, but тьма; and there is a very poetic "folk-form" of this noun as well: те́мень. Besides, "darkness" commands a very special, untranslatable adjective, кромѣшная, which it shares only with "hell"—адъ кромѣшный—and with Ivan the Terrible's royal terrorists, his own gang опри́чники: sometimes the people called them кромѣшники. "Beauty" has two different endings at your disposal, the ordinary красота́ and the more poetic краса́. The adverb "in vain" has three forms: напра́сно, тще́тно, and всу́е, the last of them being Biblical;

"vanity" has two forms: суетá (as in "all is vanity") and тщеслáвие, etc.

Of course, the English language has some parallels of a similar distinction; but my work at this book has finally proved to me that not only are *most ancient terms dropped in English where they are absolutely alive in Russian*, but, also, that even the English Bible has only the usual modern terms where the Russian Bible has its own poetic ones.

I am not a poet (I have written lyrics only at that time of life when everyone tries to write them!), but I feel, and this little experience seems to prove it, that *the cases when a word-for-word translation combined with the original rhythm and rhyming scheme coincides exactly with the English conveying the genuine atmosphere as well, are rare, happy exceptions.* It is wonderful that such coincidences happen between our two languages at all!

I warn my reader beforehand that most of the translations given below can be somewhat improved—and will be improved if this book lives to a second edition—but without adopting any of the stereoscopic systems as if these were some all-covering sacred laws. My laws are—*the spirit, the atmosphere, the colour, and the nature of sound* of each selected poem. Sometimes the whims of these laws are very subtle and quite unique; here is the most interesting one concerning this volume:

The little pearl of Russian poetry, Al'exèy Tolstoy's lyric *It was in Early-Early Spring* (p. 253), is rhymed in the original (*a* and *c* single rhymes, and *b* and *d* double ones); but I find that the moment you try to work English rhymes into it, its atmosphere of transparency, of the ozone-breathing air, of that Something pure and light and young, is gone! . . . The *un*rhymed English approaches it much closer. So why on earth should one be pedantic, if the wording and the exact length of lines convey the music of the original, as far as it is at all possible? It is always the rhyming itself that can be sacrificed, I think, when the other conditions command it—although the proportion of long and short endings of the lines, even if unrhymed, should be preserved all the same.

Technique is not an aim in itself, but only a road for the living spirit. And that is where I do give Mr. Wilfrid Blair my hearty Russian thanks: it is for those cases in which he has helped me to open the English gateways to our Russian Spirits of Poetry.

There are two more points of difference between the English and the Russian versification—besides our love of long rhymes and of the essentially Russian three-syllable feet ending the lines, whether rhymed or not. It would be quite unnatural to our speech to write a whole book with the beat following on the last syllable of each line, as *Childe Harold* and *Paradise Lost* are written, although this characteristic feature of English poetry ought to be, and could be, preserved by our translators.

The other two contrasting points need a little preliminary explanation, being commanded by the fundamental laws of Russian sounds.

We have no diphthongs, such as *au*, *ae*, *ea*, *ie*, *ou*, *oe*, to say nothing of the sound of *w* (*aw*, *ow*, *owe*, *we*, *wi*, *wh*), which does not exist in Russian; nor have we any unpronounced vowels at the end of the words. For each vowel-sound we have a separate letter; therefore each vowel is the master of a syllable—*i.e., there are as many syllables in each Russian word as there are vowels in it.* Only the so-called "half-vowel" following a vowel (й, nearly always at the end of a word) does not form a separate syllable, because it corresponds to, and sounds exactly like, the English *y* in the words "boy," "may," "convey," etc. Therefore the adjective terminations like ой, ый, ий, form *one* syllable each, whereas the terminations ая, ое, яя, ые, ие, and ия, make *two* syllables each, as containing two vowels.

Then, all vowels have with us *the same metrical value; i.e.*, there are no "long" or "short" vowels, and therefore no "long" or "short" syllables resulting from them. To make this clearer: we have no such differences between the sound of the same vowel which you have in the "love" and "strove," or in "on" and "stone," or in "ate" and "late," in "sit" and "seat," in "not" and "note." In

speaking, you may put any amount of stress on a vowel to convey your logical stress; you may even drawl it out a bit for that same reason; or you may speak in a soft Moscow drawl altogether. But all that makes no difference whatever to the metrical value of any vowel in poetry; that value is counted and fixed as *one* unit of time for each, and nothing can make it count as *two*. There is none of that flexibility with us which allows an English poet to apply certain words either as "long" or as "short" ones. This is done by all English poets so often that I am sure I need not give any quotations. Everyone knows that the words "fire," "lyre," "liar," "power," "shower," "flower," and "tower," can be applied as one syllable or as two syllables; and with the help of ellipses a great deal more licence is permitted. Now, there are *no* ellipses in Russian, and such arbitrary handling of syllables is out of the question. "O'er-powered" squeezed into a line as *two* syllables always strikes my ear particularly.

Hence, too, our uncomfortable feeling at seeing the words "the," "a," "an," "on," "in," "with," "of," often not counted at all in a line of "scanning" English verse—while, on the other hand, the metre-beats very often fall on the *the's* and the *a's*, just as it pleases the English poet to treat them; now, to a Russian ear, both these ways of handling ruin the scanning. It is very seldom that even longer words will get a transposition of their grammatical stress in Russian poetry, although the folk's speech allows it occasionally; but then it gives the words an intentional, special flavour. Scanning is a very strict master with our classical verse. In English you seem to determine the metrical value of a word by its conversational stress; the metre with your best poets is not so much "metre" as it is "lilt"; while we Russians demand from the scanning of any metre an absolutely even succession of beats, to which you could either march or dance (I don't mean here the Maud Allan kind of dancing, but the instinctive, aboriginal rhythm of moving our human body to the counting in 2's or 3's). You would vainly search for omitted or squeezed-in syllables within the lines of our classics. I know that this regularity sounds

"stiff" to an English ear which longs for "pleasing breaks of monotony." But, to my great relief, Mr. Wilfrid Blair shares our Russian demands in this case. He was very careful not to slip in the English articles or conjunctions as extra syllables, although these don't count in English verse; and, on the very few occasions when he found them unavoidable, I passed them with great reluctance. The only case when the Russian poets would sometimes allow themselves an extra syllable in a line (but never Pûshkin, or Al'exèy Tolstòy, or Jukòvski, or Fet), would be at its beginning, before the first foot of the regular metre comes in (such as ⏑ | — ⏑ ⏑ — ⏑ ⏑ — ⏑ ⏑ or ⏑ | ⏑ — ⏑ ⏑ — ⏑ ⏑ — ⏑), but never any irregularly within the line. I am not surprised that Mr. Maurice Baring calls his English version of the little lyric by Al'exèy Tolstòy, *Through the Slush and the Ruts of the Highway* (*Russian Literature*, p. 237), "an attempt at translation": he knows that his numerous extra and omitted syllables are not to be found in this or any other modern lyrics by this great master of verse (his parables are a different thing).

Thus, my reader must not expect any "breaks of monotony" and "pleasing irregularities" from this volume; he will find in it only the strict rhythmical movements of Russian poetry, which, to our national musical instinct, are not stiffness, but *stateliness* (стрóйность).

A possible explanation of this difference in our national outlook occurs to me in the following thought:

Our private life in Russia has always been far from strictly organized; there has never been any reproachless orderliness or regularity in it; and it may be, that that part of Russian nature which is so fond of stateliness and harmony has unconsciously found for itself an outlet in the sphere of our poetry. Whereas the character of strict orderliness and regularity of private life in England has, equally unconsciously, found an outlet for the instinctive human vein of personal freedom in the licentious world of the English versification; here English personality allows itself any amount of liberties!

Of course, the first counter-thought to this suggestion on the part of an Englishman will be: "But is it not, on the

contrary, the ever-present oppression in your land that has laid its chains even on your poetry?"

No! no!—Only those can think so who know not the enormous amount of freedom—both of the desirable and the undesirable kind—which permeates Russian life in spite of the grip of officialdom. The latter has certainly nothing to do with the national spirit of art; while longing for *stateliness* in beauty has been a typical national feature in Russia since her very dawn: it blends with the quiet greatness of her vastness, her *prostor*,* the vastness around your body and within your mind. . . . Somehow, there is stateliness and rhythmical repose in that very breadth and freedom and naturalness to which the Russian soul opens itself as a sunflower does to sunshine. . . . We expect from fine poetry the same rhythmic beat which we feel in the harmony of Nature.

The collective folk-poetry of Russia, her ancient **били́ны**† and **сказа́нія** ("tellings"), however different their lilt from the classical metres, have a most distinct character of that restful breadth and stateliness about them. I would never dream of translating them into English. They are absolutely uninterpretable, unconveyable; and when our master-poets leave their classical stateliness (which is *one* aspect), and wirte in that stateliness of the national Russian lilt and speech (which is *another* aspect), they are equally untranslatable; such are, particularly, some of Pūshkin's "tales" and Al'exèy Tolstòy's *Tsar' Ahreyàn* and other poems. It is extraordinary that Madame Voynich has achieved such a near approach to that Old Russian breadth in her translation of L'èrmontov's *Song of the Merchant Kalàshnikov*,‡ although its *exact* lilt throughout is unconveyable.

Technically speaking, this living flesh and blood of the Russian folk-poetry rests with the amount of dactyls (— ⏑ ⏑), rhymed or unrhymed, ending the lines, which more often than not begin with an anapest (⏑ ⏑ —) and contain some choreys as well as successions of altogether unaccentuated syllables inserted within them. These features are, of course, mostly due to the length of many

* *The Russians and their Language*, pp. 25-28. † *Ibid.*, p. 36.
‡ See p. 202 of this volume.

Russian adjectives and passive past participles, such as: за|кол|до́|ван|ная, о|то|ро́|чен|ный, во|ло|ти́|сты|я, за|пле|тён|ны|я, не|на|гля́д|на|я,* *etc.*; also to the twist given by the folk's speech to the past tense, the infinitive, and the gerund of the verbs, such as: вер|ну́|ла|ся, у|ло|жи́|ла|ся|, за|и|гра́|ли|ся, гну|ша́|ти|ся, ло|бо|ва́|ти|ся, и|гра́|ю|чи, гу|ля́|ю|чи, со|би|ра|ю|чи, ис|пу|га́|вши|ся,† *etc.*, which all of them turn the chorey endings (— ⏑) into dactyls (— ⏑ ⏑). And then there are the numberless essentially Russian "twists of caressiveness"‡ with which our folk's speech lovingly provides any amount of words; there is no end to them in any Russian poem dealing with the life of the people. For instance: го|ло́|ву|шка, со|сѣ́|ду|шки, по|да́|ро|чекъ, но́|чень|ка, дѣ|ти́|ну|шка, со́л|ны|шко, бли|зе́|хонь|ко, те|мне́|хонь|ко,§ all of them, again, increasing the original length of each word.

A metre scheme of any part of such poems will illustrate to the English verse-writer what these twists and forms result in, although I do not expect his English heart to be touched by that Russian lilt! Here is the structure of some consecutive lines taken at random from L'èrmontov's *Song*:

⏑ ⏑ — ⏑ ⏑ — ⏑ ⏑ ⏑ — ⏑ ⏑[1]
⏑ ⏑ — ⏑ ⏑ ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ ⏑
⏑ ⏑ — ⏑ ⏑ ⏑ — ⏑ ⏑ — ⏑ ⏑
⏑ ⏑ — ⏑ ⏑ ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ ⏑
⏑ ⏑ — ⏑ ⏑ ⏑ ⏑ — ⏑ ⏑
⏑ ⏑ — ⏑ ⏑ ⏑ ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ —
⏑ ⏑ — ⏑ ⏑ ⏑ ⏑ — ⏑ ⏑
⏑ ⏑ — ⏑ ⏑ ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ ⏑
⏑ ⏑ — ⏑ ⏑ ⏑ — ⏑ ⏑ — ⏑ ⏑[2]

[1] Не сіяетъ на нёбѣ солнце крáсное.
[2] Въ удовóльствіе своé и весéліе.

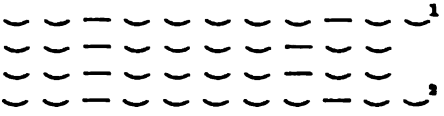
* Meaning: bewitched, trimmed (with fur), golden-y, plated. The fifth adjective is a very Russian term of endearment: it means one whose appearance is so dear to you that you *never* can quench your thirst of looking at him.

† Meaning in these as well as in their original forms: returned, lay down, played about to one's heart's content, to spurn, to feast one's eyes on, playing, walking out, getting ready, having got a fright.

‡ See *The Russians and their Language*, pp. 138-140, 142-144.

§ In their original forms equivalent to the English: head, neighbours, gift, night, child, sun, near, dark.

Or:



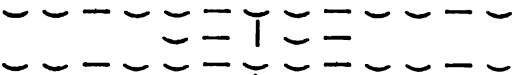
[1] И ласкáлъ онъ меня, цѣловáлъ меня.
[2] Поцѣлýи его окаáнные.

And yet it is absolutely different from the Western *vers libre*. Entirely different! When the Walt-Whitman-y style occasionally pervades the modern Russian poetry, it does not in the least make it sound anything like the Old Russian lilt. The latter commands, before anything else, an absolute balance of conceptions, an even distribution of images, metaphors, and verbs, so that nearly every line of the Old Russian style of poetry (whether genuine or created by the pen of a master) contains a complete, rounded-off sentence.

The modern Western "free verse" is so unnatural to the national Russian poetic instinct that even our modernists, who are so keen on anything new, very seldom play with it. It will not live long with us. To the majority of educated Russians it is but poetically worded prose. The Russian ear longs either for the classical rhythmical stateliness or for the inexplicable lilt of the stateliness of the poetic folk's speech.

Our modern poets bravely and masterfully enlarge the sphere of our old metres; but when they do so they try to carry the new rhythm throughout a poem. Both their ideas and their forms will make the second volume of this book sound rather different from the first one. But I must not anticipate. I would, however, like to point out forthwith that their "novelties" of metre have that same stamp of a stately regularity about them. Here are a few examples:

From Valèri Br'usov:



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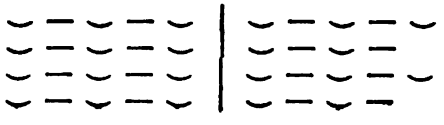

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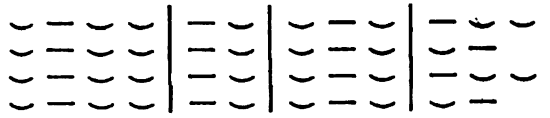
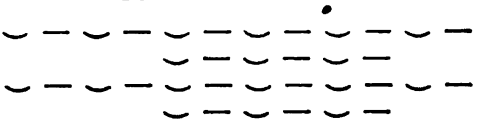


From Zinaïda Gippius:



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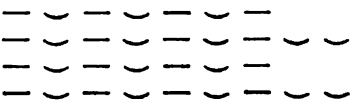
Or:



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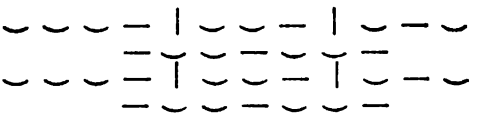


Now for the last point of difference: our rhymes. Not the *nature* of rhyming, of which enough has been said, and will be seen from the translations, but the Russian rhymes themselves, which are birds no English net could catch!

If such a thing as a complete rhyming dictionary existed in Russian (I have never heard of one), it would make some thirty or forty formidable volumes. The main source of this wealth is, of course, *that same abundance in grammatical terminations which is regarded by some philologists as a cumbersome survival, a burden left from the undeveloped stages of a language.*

H'm! . . . this is a question. I know how one feels about it when translating Russian poetry into English.

"Well, haven't our poets created a wealth of beautiful poetry without your grammatical terminations?" will be the natural remark of every English person.

"Of course they have," is my answer; "but what variety of forms and of sound they could have added to it if they hadn't been shut-in in the small squirrel's wheel of English rhymes!"

What an irritating thing it must have been to the greatest of your masters when a fine line would flash through their minds, ending with "heaven"! It *had* to be reconstructed, as they could not drag the beauty of the thought down with a "leven" or "seven." Isn't it a torment to have to pull "mountains" and "fountains" together when you come across any of them, simply because there is nothing that rhymes with them outside each other? . . . What a misery to dread the word "happy" forcing its way into the end of your line, lest you should be bound to introduce a "puppy" (allowed by my rhyming-dictionary)! Or to shun the words "holy" and "sacred," because you don't always feel inclined for "melancholy," and because nothing rhymes with "sacred" at all; or that unenviable business to be faced by a "shadow" or "widow," or even an innocent "window"! And "beauty"? Poor "beauty"! never allowed anything but the company of "duty"! Very dull. And "maiden"? You cannot always have something "laden" to match her! Nor is "tophet" necessarily dwelling in your mind when you feel inspired by some "prophet." "Nature" stands quite solitary; "happiness" and "temple" also. "World" demands to have something "curled" or "furled" or "hurled" with it, and all it can do is to have it "uncurled" or "unfurled" again!

The poor abstract "spirits" have still less chance, as they have the hard luck of reminding you of Mr. Pickwick's way of balancing his inner heat with the outer one. Also, there is only one word for "blue" and "light blue," when we have си́ний and голубо́й for these; only one for "clouds" and "fleecy clouds," in the place of our ту́чи and облака́; only one for "rings" and "ear-rings," in the place of ко́льца and се́рьги, etc. To counterbalance these, English people always bring forward the *one* Russian word for "hand" and "arm," and *one* for "foot" and "leg," and stick to it because there is not much road left beyond this

starting-point. I will help them: we have only one word for "jest" and "joke" (шу́тка), only one for "to believe in" and "to have faith in" (a complete verb: вѣ́рить), only one for "sky" and "heaven" (небо; *in plural* небеса́), only one for "toes" and "fingers" (па́льцы), only one for "Eden" and "Paradise"; and there must be some more such cases, although the only English word I really miss in Russian is "revel"! What a word! and how "Russian" it sounds! Yet we have not got it. But if my reader glances back at p. xxi, if he has read *The Russians and their Language*, and if he adds to all this what is coming presently about the rhymes, I can hardly see where there is room for any doubt which way the balance tends.

Let us go back to the rhymes.

According to the nature of the Russian speech, the whole weight of a rhyme rests with its accentuated vowel; therefore, besides the ideal rhymes, their numbers are supplemented by those long strings of words where the similarity rests with the accentuated penultimates (the syllable before last), while the very last vowel is only an assonance. Of course, the linking consonant must be the same in these cases; no Russian ear, nor the ear of an English poet, can expostulate with such rhymes. For instance, убо́гій (poor = "one who is with God") rhymes perfectly well with мно́го (plenty) or with доро́га (way, journey); ня́нѣ (nurse, *in dat.*) rhymes with очарова́ній (fascination, *plur.*, *gen.*), which sounds beautiful, although it looks wrong to an English eye (this will be explained presently); сча́стье (happiness) rhymes, besides its ideal rhymes, with стра́сти (passions, or of passion). Pûshkin has a fine example of this kind where he rhymes four syllables running, with a dropping assonance in the last syllables:

тол|сто|пу́|ый ("fat-bellied").
съ|том|ной|му|зой ("with the languid Muse").

Where it looks to an English eye to be a different vowel from the one accentuated in the rhyming word, it only *looks* so; because our *light* vowels (я, ѣ, е, ю) sound the same in themselves, when voiced, as their corresponding *dark* vowels

(а, э, о, у): they only palatalize the preceding consonant. Thus, the following are absolutely correct rhymes:

глядя́ть солда́ть	(they are) looking. soldier.	иду́ть у́быть	(they are) going. cosiness.	ротъ поле́тъ	mouth. flight.
забы́ть	forgotten.	поэтъ	poet.	ла́ска	(a) caress.
серда́ть	angry.	свѣтъ	world.	пля́ска	(a) dance.

Also, in Russian, the consonants п, т, к, and с (*p*, *t*, *k*, and *s*), rhyme with б, д, г, and з (*b*, *d*, *g*, and *z*), the same as they do in English. But besides the cases when these consonants wind up a short rhyme as they do in English (cup—rub; lot—nod; rock—dog; miss—is; холо́пъ—добъ; братъ—радъ; стукъ—другъ; вопро́съ—грозъ), they are very often followed in Russian by the accentuated vowel which winds up a short rhyme. Unlike the English language, the Russian has endless rows of words ending with a *voiced* vowel (as in "me," but *never* as in "fume"); thus, the following kind of rhymes is absolutely correct:

спи люби́	sleep! love!	ста года́	hundred (*gen.*). years.	рука́ пора́	hand. horns.	роса́ глаза́	dew. eyes.

I have mentioned these last three points of what *looks* to be licence, in order that my reader who knows no Russian, but is interested in versification, should not think that some of the coming rhymes are bad ones. Let us take the "holy—melancholy" case, for example. "Holy" rhymes in Russian with—

Adjectives (*Masc.*, *Sing.*, *Nom.*).		*Nouns* (*Masc.*, *Sing.*, *Nom.*).	
Свято́й,	**Holy.**	бой,	fight.
нѣмо́й,	dumb.	знай,	swelter.
глухо́й,	deaf.	рой,	swarm.
злой,	wicked.	вой,	howl.
лихо́й,*	nicely wicked.	усто́й,	foundation (*Old R.*).
удало́й,	recklessly brave.	поко́й,	rest.
нагой́,	naked (*Bible*; *Old R.*).	поко́й,	room (*Old R.*).
вито́й,	woven.	засто́й,	standstill.
просто́й,	simple.	нало́й,	a sainted table.†
вѣково́й,	age-old.	прибой,	the surges of the high-sea coming in.
сѣдо́й,	grey-haired.		
золото́й,	golden.		

* *The Russians and their Language*, pp. 191, 192.

† A table in the church on which the Bible is kept, or around which the wedding ceremony is performed.

Adjectives (*Masc., Sing., Nom.*).

голубóй,	light blue.
молодóй,	young.
литóй,	cast (*of metal*).
чужóй,	a stranger.
роднóй,	a term of endearment, contrasting with "stranger."*
живóй,	alive, vivid.
	Etc.

Also with—

мой,	mine (*masc., nom.*).
твóй,	thine (*masc., nom.*).
свой,	his, its (*masc., nom.*).
другóй,	another (*masc., nom.*).
инóй,	different (*masc., nom.*).
той,	that (*fem., dat.*).
пой,	sing (*imp.*).
стой,	halt (*imp.*).
скрой,	conceal (*imp.*).
укрой,	shelter, cover (*imp.*).
	Etc.

Nouns (*Masc., Sing., Nom.*).

отбóй,	the surges rolling back.
	Etc.

Nouns (*Fem., Sing., Instrum.*).

красотóй,	beauty.
красóй,	beauty (*more poetic*).
высотóй,	height.
широтóй,	breadth.
глубинóй,	depth.
женóй,	wife.
пятóй,	heel.
толпóй,	crowd.
горóй,	mountain.
водóй,	water.
рѣкóй,	river.
звѣздóй,	star.
мольбóй,	entreating.
душóй,	soul.
судбóй,	fate.
зимóй,	in the winter.
веснóй,	in the spring.
	Etc.

Considering that these are only those rhymes I found at my finger-tips on the spur of the moment, it is not a bad selection in itself; but what I would like my reader to realize particularly, in this and in every other case, is the following: *Each of the nouns, pronouns, and adjectives, given in the columns of rhymes, has up to six or eight various terminations of declension,† while each verb has up to twenty various terminations; and each of those will naturally command a different set of rhymes, each of which in its turn will command yet another set, and so forth!* Thus, every word is only a link in the endless network; and even those words which happen to have in their nominative only one or two rhymes (such as "sky," нéбо, *in sing.*), or none at all (such as "life," жизнь, and "death," смерть)—even they do not break the chain: because all you have to do, when you want them, is to apply them, not in the nominative, but in some of the other

* It is derived from the root meaning "kin." For an exhaustive explanation, see *The Russians and their Language*, pp. 59, 60.

† There are the six cases: Nominative, genitive, dative, accusative, instrumental, and prepositional (or locative), each of them commanded by a different lot of prepositions. But some of the terminations are similar, so I am not counting them.

declension cases. Thus, "death" in genitive or dative, смéрти, at once brings in the rhymes: чéрти (devils), шéрсти (fleece), вѣ́рьте (believe), измѣ́рьте (measure), похéрьте (cancel), and several more.

Смерть is by no means a good word for rhyming, as compared to thousands of others; but it does not make a dead-stop in the chain, while its only companion in English, "breath," дыха́ніе, has a queue of nouns vanishing in the distance, which keep it company along all the path of declension—*i.e.*, have the same termination as дыха́ніе has in each of the cases; it rhymes with: attention, confession, knowledge, glimmer, torment, suffering, trying, etc.

Again, the "sky," нéбо, has only хлѣ́ба (bread, *in gen.*) to rhyme with it, as far as I can remember just now; but хлѣбъ has nine more different terminations, while "skies" (*in plur.*) has any number of rhymes even in its nominative alone, such as: voices, forests, miracles, sails, dew, beauty, streak, eyes, tear, etc.—*each of which has the group of its own declension endings, and therefore commands several more quite different sets of rhymes.*

In this way, "wife" or "spring" or "wave," which we had in the first example in the *instrumental* case, rhyme in their *nominative* with quite a different set of words:

Nouns; also Adjectives in Fem., used as Predicates.		*Nouns, Masc. and Neut. in Gen.*	
жена́,	**wife.**	сна,	sleep.
луна́,	moon.	челна́,	boat (*Old R.*).
война́,	war.	вина́,	wine.
страна́,	country.	зерна́,	grain, corn.
волна́,	wave.	окна́,	window.
вѣ́рна́,	faithful.	дна,	bottom.
стройна́,	stately.	руна́,	fleece.
она́,	she.	звена́,	link.
	Etc.		Etc.

I am not adding to this the long rows of inferior rhymes in which the last (the rhyming) vowel would be preceded, not by н, but by some different consonant, such as судьба́, fate, or гора́, mountain (the parallels to which are quite permissible in English: me—liberty; free—joyously; view—new; etc.). But this leads me to the couple "mountains—

fountains": let us see what choice they have in Russian in their *nominative alone*, and rhymed with *nominative only*:

"Mountains" rhymes with: glances, designs, choirs, quarrels, disputes, feuds, dens, spurs, onslaughts, preparations, arrays, of Aurora, etc. While "fountains" rhymes with: giants, wounds, heathen (басурма́ны, a folk's expression), bards, sheep, fogs, timpanos, quivers, (arrow-), hurricanes, etc.

"Power," е́ила, has innumerable rhymes in Russian, because its last syllable (*in nom.*) is the same as the termination of scores and scores of verbs in the past tense, *sing. femin.* Thus, it rhymes with: beat, killed, captivated, tempted, forgot, beckoned, jested, loved, blamed, praised, etc., and with a number of adjectives ending with лый: ми́лый, уны́лый, посты́лый (dear, dreary, "one of whom one is sick and tired"), etc.

"Happiness," счастье, rhymes with: compassion, bad weather, bad luck, powers, passions, parts, and many more.

"Flowers," цвѣты́, rhymes with: leaves, thick, empty, gardens, (of a) star, (of) driving, (of) water, (of) vanity, mouths, features, labours, fasts, "Where art thou?" . . .

"Eternal," ве́чный, rhymes with: human, careless, endless, cripple, fleeting, encountered, etc.

"Freedom," свобо́да, rhymes with: Nature, year, people (*in gen.*), species, firmament (*in gen.*), sunrise (*in gen.*), campaign (*in gen.*), etc.

"Mother," мать, and "brother," братъ, have no end of rhymes, although quite different ones, because the *hard* consonants (like the ть) are never rhymed with *soft* ones (like the ть).

The English problem of rhyming "temple" or "circle" does not exist in Russian, either: they rhyme with numbers of words.

The whole mass of the endless interlacements of Russian rhymes must be clear to the reader by this time, I hope. May I just add that "maiden," дѣви́ца, has a delightful string of rhymes of a "very Russian" hue, which all of them follow her throughout the changes of declension:

дѣви́ца,	**maiden.**
цари́ца,	tsaritsa.
сестри́ца,	dear sister.
темни́ца,	"a dark place," one of the three terms for "prison."
вдови́ца,	widow (*folk's expression*).
денни́ца,	day (*poetic*).
зарни́ца,	flash-lightning.
гробни́ца,	tomb.
багряни́ца,	a scarlet gown (*Bible*).
верени́ца,	a file of.
пѣви́ца,	singer.
столи́ца,	capital (*city*).
свѣтли́ца,	"a bright place" = a room (*Old R.*).
зѣни́ца,	pupil of the eye (*Old R.*).
орли́ца,	she-eagle.
льви́ца,	lioness.
молоди́ца,	a nice young woman (*folk's expression*).
небыли́ца,	"what has not really happened."
пти́ца,	bird.

Besides this row of most adequate companions in sound, "maiden" rhymes with the third person, present tense, of some hundred of verbs: зли́тся, клуби́тся, мнится, мчится, etc. We shall come across this particular rhyme when dealing with Pûshkin's fairy-tale *Tsar' Saltân*.

But I cannot part with the rhymes without mentioning here *the* word which in English is one of the poorest, and with us one of the richest: "love."

As compared with its four terminations in English (love, loves, loved, and loving, none of which is well suited), in Russian the *noun* любо́вь has two more declension endings, любви́, любо́вью; while the *verb* люби́ть has, in addition to its infinitive, six terminations in the present tense, three in the past tense, two in the superlative, two in the gerund (past and present), and—really I feel too lazy to count up how many endings its adjective participle has, winding its way through the six cases, three genders, two tenses, and two numbers!*

Not all of these terminations have an equally luxurious queue of rhymes; for instance, the noun in the nominative, любо́вь, has only five, I think: вновь (again, anew), кровь (blood), славосло́вь (glorify), бровь (eye-brow), and гото́вь (prepare). But take it in the genitive, and choose from dozens of verbs in the imperative. Take it in the instrumental, and find lots of other nouns corresponding to it in their instrumental. Take it in the gerund—a new assortment. Take it in the past tense, and enjoy yourself

* *The Russians and their Language*, p. 6.

amongst scores of other verbs in the same gender and number.

A few examples from this luxurious nook of rhymes may be interesting to those who have to struggle with the "love—glove—dove—above" problem (myself and other translators of Russian poetry being worst-placed of all, you can believe me!).

любúть,	**to love.**	**люблю́,**	**I love.**
жить,	to live.	пью,	I drink.
молúть,	to entreat.	сплю,	I sleep.
хвалúть,	to praise.	дремлю́,	I doze.
вить,	to weave.	ловлю́,	I catch.
бúть,	to beat.	дéлю,	I share
усыпúть,	to send to sleep.	велю́,	I shall order.
ходúть,	to go.	пришлю́,	I shall send.
находúть,	to find.	удивлю́,	I shall surprise.
мнить,	to think (*Old R.*).	налью́	I shall pour out.
сулúть,	to promise (*Old R.*).	копью́,	(to the) spear.
шалúть,	to make fun.	струю́,	the stream (*acc.*).
спалúть,	to burn (*Bible*).	твою́,	thine (*fem.*, *acc.*).
купúть,	to buy.	мою́,	mine (*fem.*, *acc.*).
топúть,	to heat, to melt.	семью́,	family (*acc.*).
	Etc.		Etc.

Please note that I am giving different verbs in each group purposely; but nearly every one of them goes with the endings of the other columns *as well*.

"Loved" (**любúлъ**, *masc.*) rhymes in Russian with: spoke, carried, threatened, asked, forgave, seized, stirred, blamed (*Old R.*), quenched, deadened, hastened, planted, strength (*gen.*), bridle (*gen.*), luminaries (*gen.*), lovable (*predicate*), etc.

"Of love" (**любвú**) rhymes with: catch! pluck, tear off! live! call! swim! etc.

"Loving" (**любя́**) rhymes with: thee, oneself (*acc.*), ruining (*ger.*), thine (*fem.*), mine (*fem.*), earth, existence (*gen.*), fields, rudder (*gen.*), poplars, etc.

To crown all this, "to fall in love" (a special form of the verb), and "to be in love" (*short* adjectives, used as predicates), and "those who are in love" (*long* adjectives), are all of them *various* aspects of the *same* word "love"! **Влюбúться** is "to fall in love" (and has its own gallery of terminations); **влюблéнъ** (*masc.*), **влюблена́** (*fem.*), **влю-**

бле́ны (*plur.*), are the predicates: "is in love," and "are in love"; these have no other terminations. **Влюблённый, влюблённая, влюблённые, влюблённыя**, are the long adjectives, going with those creatures who are in love, and having all the declension endings. Let us have just one of all this lot, a predicate in the masculine singular:

"I am in love," **влюблёнъ** (or, he is, thou art, *masc.*) rhymes with: he, intoxicated, (is) under the shelter of, lighted up with, carried away by, into captivity (*Old R.*), the ringing sound of, flax, moan, law, throne, sleep, wives (*gen.*, *plur.*), the ringing of all bells, called (part.; Bible), fascinated, or lured into, etc.

Meanwhile, the *feminine* of the predicate "is in love" or "am in love" goes with every one of those rhymes which we had for "wife" and "moon," and with all their unmentioned fellow-words.

I shall not add any more groups; but are these few not enough to make the mouth of an English poet water? . . . Really, even those few English critics who think that the wealth of the Russian language has been overrated cannot possibly deny the wealth of the Russian rhymes, which is beyond any comparison to the English. It seems to me that, even if it were for poetry's sake only, all these unpruned forms of our speech are worth having!

P.S.—1. My reader will notice that, dealing with the biographies of the poets, I have accepted the suggestion made in *The Times* Literary Supplement—namely, I apply the name "Petersburg" for such time as the city was known as "Petersburg"; and "Petrograd" when referring to the times since 1914.

2. The numbering of the pages given in the references refers to the *second* edition of *The Russians and their Language*.

3. In transliterating into English some Russian words and all the names, I have maintained the system suggested in *The Russians and their Language*—namely, the soft, palatalized, consonants are denoted by little commas at their top corner (these are not apostrophes: we have *no* apostrophes in Russian), instead of having an English *i* or

a *y* inserted after them where there is none of these in Russian. Also, *j* stands for the sound of the French *j*, which is our ж; and *h* stands for the Russian х, instead of applying the artificial *h* and *kh* (there *The Times* also agrees with me).

The vowels, too, stand for their original Russian (and Italian) sounds, and not for their Anglicized aspects.

And, finally, my reader will probably not mind my reminding him what one is apt to forget after the school-days are over—namely, the names of the metres:

The two-syllable metres are the iambic (⏑ —) and the trochee (— ⏑); and the three-syllable ones are the anapest (⏑ ⏑ —), the amphibrach (⏑ — ⏑), and the dactyl (— ⏑ ⏑). The line in each case indicates the metrical beat, while the little bows stand for the unstressed syllables.

The original metre scheme of each poem is given in order to lead the reader into the metre straight away, and to let him follow the achievements, as well as the drawbacks, in the way of transposing the metrical beats, the latter being my unwilling giving in to the licences of *English* poetry!

I cannot help adding yet another point now that Russia has entered a new era, since this volume was written:

The seemingly blind idealism of the Russians who insisted on trusting and believing in Russia has proved its instinctively-correct raison d'être. And some poems translated in this book have thus acquired an additional meaning—one of prophecies! These are: Pùshkin's "Ode to Liberty" (p. 109), T'ùtchev's "Russia can ne'er be grasped by mind" (p. 226), Al'exèy Tolstŏy's ending to the "Tsar' Akhreyou" satirical tale (pp. 247, 248) *and N'ekrāsov's song Rus'* (p. 287).

Only T'ùtchev's "The Sea and the Cliff" (*p.* 222) *has fallen flat—and Russia is grateful for it!*

N. JARINTZOV.

March, 1917.

RUSSIAN POETS AND POEMS

IVÀN ANDRÈYEVICH KRYLÒV

FABULIST

1768—1844

Дѣдушка Крыловъ—"Grandfather Krylòv"—that is how we have always known him. A grandfather indeed: old, big, stout, kindly, with a twinkle of acute judgment in the corner of his eye, taking things easy, making no foes, and a little comical in his old-bachelor habits; and also, the grandfather of Russian classical poetry, who first put the breeze and the breadth of the land into it; the only great Russian author about whom there have been no controversies.

Literature in Russia is a subject for ever-present talks and discussions, and a source from which many a fountain of sparkling, splashing, drowning criticism has sprung! Volumes of passionately-contradictory matter have been written about Jukòvski, Pùshkin, L'èrmontov, N'ekràsov, Gògol', Dostoyèvski, Tolstòy; but there has been no debating about Krylòv.

We have practically no nursery rhymes in Russian; but we very early hear quotations from the classics and short verses which our brain and heart suck in instinctively, lovingly, before we know where they

come from. A child of six or seven is likely to repeat to himself half consciously, while playing:

"In the blue sky stars are flashing,
In the blue sea waves are splashing;
O'er the sky a cloud-sheet creeps,
O'er the waves a barrel leaps.

"O'er the sea the wind's a-gadding,
And a little boat he's madding.
Runs the boat across the sea
With its sails all swelling free."

Or,

"Near a sea cove an oak is growing,
Around that oak a golden chain.
Along that chain Sir Cat-the-knowing
Doth ever walk and walk again.
Goes to the right—a song he chaunteth,
Goes to the left—a tale he tells.
'Tis wonderland: there wood fiend haunteth,
And mermaid 'mid the branches dwells," etc.

This beginning of the famous *Prologue* to a fairy-tale, by Pùshkin, is not unlike, in its structure, some nice English nursery rhymes; but it is not worse, either! Or, a child will suddenly address someone with:

"Tom is a knave! Tom is a thief!"

(Not actually "Tom," but the corresponding Russian "Vas'ka" for a tom-cat, of course.) Or with:

"Shame, neighbour! Stop that silly row!"

Or he will hum to himself the lines lending themselves so well to a musical inspiration of any artistic youthful soul:

"Hail to thee, my native land!
Steeds in prairies straying,
Eagles screaming in the skies,
Wolves through snow-storm baying," etc.

About the age of seven or eight the Russian children willingly learn whole fables, verses, and quotations from long poems told to them by friendly "grown-ups" (our children call them бо́льшие=the big ones), by mothers and even by fathers. Every nursery governess of some education will willingly read poetry for hours to her open-eyed and open-mouthed audience. There has been a good deal of classical poetry which is of enormous educational value, as well as of absorbing interest, since one's childhood—by Pùshkin, Kol'tzòv, Al'exèy Tolstòy, Fet, Polònski; but Krylòv usually comes first, after which he remains with you all your lifetime, gradually revealing more and more depth of meaning. This value has been acknowledged in those very days when his fables appeared one by one; and has remained so, backed up by all the educational and literary circles, and by B'el'ìnski himself—the artist-critic who watched the birth and the brilliant early bloom of Russian classical poetry, and who analyzed it all with such merciless acuteness that he was nicknamed "Vissarion (B'el'ìnski's Christian name) the Furious."*

And how could Krylòv be anything but dear and near† to the Russians—despite their frequent excursions into the spheres of passion and mysticism? There are a great many facets to the prism of Russian many-sidedness; and one of them is the feature em-

* It is not exactly "furious" in Russian—which is свире́пый—but неи́стовый: one of those extremely graphic Russian epithets. This adjective, here attached to B'el'ìnski, is also used to translate the title of Tasso's *Orlando Furioso*: "Неи́стовый Орландъ.'

† Родно́й (see *The Russians and their Language*, p. 59).

bodied in Krylòv's fables: the common sense, the fair, quick judgment.

The other day I had a delightful long talk with one of the leading men of our Zemstvos, who had spent the greater part of his life on his estate, in close touch with the peasantry. "Our peasant is the greatest diplomat in the world," said he: "tact is rooted in him, innate. He won't say what he feels is tactless and imprudent, even if you chopped a cudgel on his head.* But he knows exactly, all the time, what is the essential truth of the matter."

Here is something for those admirers of Russia who see in our peasantry only its holy humility. . . . But perhaps one does need to be a Russian in order to вмѣсти́ть—to "find place (for) inside oneself"—all these ingredients which go to make our so-called simple masses. Russia is much finer than "holy"!

To return to Krylòv: He has depicted all the shortcomings of that race of ours in a speech which rang for the first time in the young life of Russian literature as actually *Russian:* in the place of the pseudo-classic, elaborate tone, there was the genuine everyday speech with all the breeziness of folk expressions, and all the brevity and directness of national common sense. The form itself of his poetry—fables written in iambics, of various length—appealed as a relief, a refreshing breeze after the gorgeous ode-writing. But, besides this, they came as a spring bringing out the sap of the national soil.

* Хоть колъ на головѣ теши́!—a national expression that stands for most trying circumstances.

Krylòv knew that soil to the core. Besides the spirit and outlook which in themselves are so undilutedly Russian, his speech itself is so interwoven with genuine folk's witticisms, definitions, sayings and metaphors, that sometimes one does not know which is which, and which of the two has taken some form from the other—Krylòv from the national speech or the national speech from Krylòv? Here are a few examples—*just those that are more or less translatable:* A mouthful of trouble; a mount off the shoulders; sweat rolling like a hail; to meet each other nose to nose; it is sickly to live, but more sickly to die; from fire into flame (=from bad to worse); don't spit into a well; if shepherd is a fool, so are his dogs; God save us from a fool!—etc. But the best part of his writing itself consists in the fact that when he describes something heavy, slow, dull—you feel as if his words were only just-just able to string themselves together; while, the moment the subject veers round to light, easy, graceful matters, the words flutter and sparkle and chirp in perfect exuberance! This quality of his fables is, of course, the most difficult one to convey in translation.

There had been some attempts at writing fables before Krylòv, that is true; but when his came, it seemed as if there had never been anything written in Russian before. He absorbed everything he saw, by his all-penetrating spirit, and has remained unequalled as a fabulist ever since. B'el'ìnski uses a very Russian term for characterizing the national vein in the boisterous speech of Krylòv: he calls it

"curliness" (кудря́вость). This again may seem a clash of opposing features—directness and curliness together! But those who know the Russian speech well will know what it means: there exists plenty of playfulness in it which "hits not the eyebrow but the eye itself," as we say. The effectiveness of Krylòv's blows resulted from his exactness in aiming, and his self-control in applying the right amount of power: he possessed that literary tact which does not let a clever writer say a single line too much. He had a firm ground for every word he wrote. Further artistic value of his words rests with the vitality and irony which bubble through it all.

Krylòv came across his vocation at the age of nearly forty, almost by chance, through trying his hand on a translation of three fables by La Fontaine. Previously he wrote only small humorous verses and stories, a few comedies, and a musical farce (both music and text, when he was sixteen); but as soon as he did try fable-writing, his special poetic talent revealed itself indubitably, even through his first translations: he simply re-created La Fontaine's subjects, reshaping, adding, and completing the original lines in a spirit which made them utterly Russian; he excelled himself in this respect very soon in *Le Corbeau et le Renard*, the acuteness and vividness of which is strikingly increased by the subtle "curliness" of Krylòv's rendering.

After that he began writing his own fables, but without hurry and scurry, always fundamentally, and always directly to the point. From the year

1812 he received a permanent high post at the head of the Imperial Library in St. Petersburg, and then the machinery of administrative and social life easily presented itself to his observing mind. Even without going into the inner meaning of his satires and allegories, the whole of the Russian "wide" public and school-world—as much as there was of them in those days—at once felt the wit and the right judgment in his creations, and welcomed the gallery of the images that were born to live through centuries: the vain crow, the stupidly ambitious frog and pug-dog, the naïve Mishka-the-bear (shortened from Michael and corresponding to the yankee "Teddy"), the stupid pike, the always clever tom-cat (Васька котъ), the self-admiring orator-cook, the over-hospitable host, the lion and the eagle both in their grandeur and in their mistakes, the ass dangerous in his willingness, monkey-the-rogue (прока́зница марты́шка), Kumà-the-Fox (кума лиса), etc.

Here I must mention straight away that among the translations of Krylòv's fables into twenty-one languages there exists an English volume by H. A. Harrison, published in 1884 and containing 145 fables. (The complete Russian editions contain 201 of them; about fifty of them are written on the subjects taken from Æsop, La Fontaine, and Florian.) This translator gives a good rendering of the meaning of the fables; but I would like to repeat here what has been already mentioned in the Introduction: To my mind, a translator should never ignore the typical national expressions of any original for which no

equivalents can be found; everyone knows that in translating poetry one is bound hand and foot, and that *some* original words have got to be omitted, while, in other cases, *some* words have got to be added; but, in doing so, one ought to be most careful that none of those terms which essentially breathe of the spirit of the land should be sacrificed in a casual manner: what has *no* equivalent should be explained.

Well, the moment you cross the Russian frontier you are in a land which is overshadowed, drowned by the legions of *kum* and *kumà* (кумъ, кумá; *plur.* кумовья)! Here is the official explanation: Every man whose child is your godchild is your *kum*; every woman whose child is your godchild is your *kumà*; every man who is the godfather of your own child is your *kum*; every woman who is the godmother of your own child is your *kumà*; every man who acted as godfather on the occasion when you acted as a godmother is your *kum*; and every woman who acted as a godmother when you acted as a godfather is your *kumà*. All of these interlacements are pronounced by the Russian Church to be "spiritual relationship," on the ground of which one is not allowed to marry your fellow-*kum* or fellow-*kumà* (with the godchild between you). This relationship is admitted by the religious and by the simple folk; but, being somewhat abundant, it does not really permeate Russian life with "spiritual" relationship only; reality does not altogether live up to that height! Naturally enough, the terms *kum* and *kumà* have acquired the meaning of "chum," standing

mostly as a humorous term for happy, more or less intimate friends. In this case, the national whim has focussed itself on applying these terms exactly in the opposite sense to exclusively "spiritual" relations. Even religious people will call their special friends *kum*, or *kumà*, when they need a decorum, a sanctifying element for some of their private affairs. This decorum is followed unanimously, tacitly, good-naturedly; and it is only from the corner of some eye that the true nature of *kumovstvò* (кумовствó=the state of being *kum* and *kumù*) peeps out. Thus, if your bonny cook asks you whether her *kum* may visit her in the kitchen, you may allow this or not; but, if you do, you join the little game of make-believe that he *is* her *kum* and nothing more. It is a hearty, universally understood term among the working classes (and sometimes, for fun, amongst the higher ones) which throws a veil of respectful oblivion on certain details of private life. For instance, a fellow who is "half-seas over" will offer as a perfect excuse for it the fact that he had to treat his *kum* to a "small glass" (стакáнчикъ)—the *kum* most likely having appeared on the spur of the moment in the personality of the first comrade he met when longing for a drink in company!

Thus, in Krylòv's fable *The Cook and the Cat*, the cook's absence from the kitchen is briefly explained, in a humorously-serious tone, by the cook's pious manners which prompted him to keep up anniversaries of the death of his *kum* by means of having a drink in his name (this custom is really not quite dead

yet, although it dates from the heathen times). But, in Mr. Harrison's translation that bosom-companion-of-a-*kum*, whether genuine or substituted, is replaced by . . . " his wife " !

Perhaps this is a small feature to an English reader, but not to a Russian one; a bright dab of national colour is gone. Kumovstvò sometimes plays in Russia a seriously unattractive rôle; and this, too, is depicted in the fable *The Conference of Mice:* an old cat, in reply to a justifiable remonstrance on the part of a young mouse, gives, as perfect reason for the arbitrary intervention of a rat, this only phrase:

" Shut up! I know it all myself.
But then, this rat is my *kumà!*"

It is impossible not to express surprise at Mr. Walishèvski's statement that " Krylòv warned his fellow-citizens against the dangers of too much learning." The realistic common sense of the Russians really ought to be taken as the right standpoint in judging Krylòv's fables; and then his critical view on the finesse of imported civilization planted on virgin Russian soil without a word of warning will appear in the true light, and not as a generalizing stupidity. Thus, Krylòv's criticism on Alexander I.'s education in Switzerland (*The Education of a Lion*) under the influence of La Harpe has been proved in the long run just, because the republican ideas remained fruitless; again, *The Peasant and the Serpent*, or *The Bee and the Flies*, to my mind has nothing to do with educational ideas: it only expresses distrust for foreign intervention. Krylòv frankly stated that

"the best of serpents is of no good even to the devil." His idea about education is that it ought to be founded on the knowledge of one's native land; it should not depend on the foreign *gouverneurs* and governesses (in whose hands the children used to be left entirely in his times), but ought to grow from sound influences of a sound home and family.

On the other hand, Krylòv is not only upholding the idea of thorough knowledge of every business versus amateurs' ardour (*The Musicians*, *The Pike and the Cat*, *The Ass and the Peasant*), but in all sorts of ways prosecutes ignorance (*The Cock and the Pearl*, *The Pig and the Oak*, *The Donkey and the Nightingale*, *The Monkey and the Glasses*, *The Eagle and the Mole*, *The Quartette*, and others). All this series of his fables was a direct accusation of many Russian institutions—and "big guns"!—of Krylòv's days. His outlook commanded a vast horizon: historical events, education, misuse of law, serfdom, bureaucratic regulations, bribery, off-hand judgment, pedantry, short-sightedness in administration, partiality, false philosophy, censorship, and most aspects of human stupidity in general. His epoch stands out in his fables like a gallery of vivid pictures. For instance, Kumà-the-Fox embodies various tricks of the none-too-honest officials: one of them passes a death-sentence over an innocent sheep and commands that its skin should be given to the plaintiff, and its flesh —to the law-courts, to cover the costs; another Kumà-Lisà (Kumà-the-Fox) guards the stores belonging to a Lion, but leaves for herself a little side-

entrance; yet another—wanting to appear just—passes, in her rôle of a judge, the verdict that the Pike (who has been providing her with fish) should be drowned in a river; and so on. But it was not only dishonesty at which Krylòv aimed in his allegories: his Lion-the-governor naïvely gives the permission to the Wolves to take "just one—only one—skin off each sheep, but not another hair!" He also had a shot at those highly-placed personalities who were "very clever while they had clever secretaries"—and also at those who would not stand any clever men round them; and at the proud nobles, and at the narrow-minded scientists, and at the authors who will read or recite so much of their works that everyone longs to run away from them! (*Demyàn's Uhà.**) But he had the gift of clothing each subject in such a generally human form, that it was full of life and wit even to those who had no idea of the original sources of his inspiration. That is what makes him a classic. He will be always clear to all nationalities, all classes, and all ages—as long as humanity remains what it is now!

Krylòv's father was a subaltern officer in Orenburg at the time when the town was threatened by Pugachòv's insurrection. In a book of reminiscences about Krylòv's childhood I have come across a vivid picture of a slowly-moving, grave child of three, silently and steadily watching the commotion of life

* *Uhà* (уха) is a very favourite fish soup; but when Demyàn's guest is pressed to have a fourth plateful of it, he snatches his cap and his belt and runs away like mad!

in a household upset by the warfare surrounding the town. At the age of eleven Krylòv was left fatherless, and it was due solely to his mother's personal efforts that he learned to read and write; throughout his whole life he could never mention her without deep emotion. They were extremely poor, and the widow had to earn their bread and butter by all kinds of humiliating "odd jobs," while the boy, left at home alone, was growing up in the world of old-fashioned fiction which he found hidden in his father's big book-chest. About the age of fifteen he began writing short comedies, and at the same time received the miserable post of an official, in Petersburg, which gave him twenty-five roubles (£2 10s.) a year. But life in the capital brought him into touch with booksellers, publishers, editors, and writers; and he struggled along, until, as was said before, he came across that nook of the creative world which was waiting for him. He was by no means inactive before he did so: journalism, self-education, printer's work, editing and publishing small satirical magazines, kept him alive and busy almost till the age of forty. The satirical and the epic vein in his prose for those magazines just suggest the idea of a fabulist's talent lurking in them; and when Krylòv discovered it himself (it took him three years to believe in it, though !) —fame was not slow to follow.* The first edition of twenty-three fables in book form was a tremendous success. Jukòvski—then editor of the *European*

* Over 40,000 copies of his volume were sold before his death, and over 80,000 by this time.

Courier—welcomed it by a brilliant review. Soon Krylòv won the affection of the Royal Family, the love and friendship of the literary circles (Jukòvski Pùshkin, Prince V'asemski, Derjàvin), the enthusiastic devotion of the school-world and children, the membership of the Academy, the name of "De la Fontaine Russe" in France, the post at the head of the Imperial Library, and good pay from the Government.

Krylòv was known to enjoy a "lazy" life: he "took it easy" and wrote only from time to time, as it pleased him and as the subjects would naturally come along his way. He did not marry, most probably with the idea that it was a troublesome business; for twenty-eight years he lived in a flat over the Imperial Library, filled with books, dust, pigeons and pigeons' food—some of the rooms quite empty, and the others crammed with neglected articles of luxury, which he would buy suddenly and unexpectedly for himself, and then never look at again. He lived alone, keeping one old female cook only (who should not be expected to be of any likeness to an English old bachelor's cook-manager, but one of the Russian type, with a waft of philosophic abstraction about her spirit!) His friends and admirers would find him always in the same room where he slept and lived altogether, lying down on a couch, reading and surrounded by books on all sides. A large picture, in a heavy frame, hung for a long time very insecurely on the wall above that couch, and friends would point the danger out to him; but Ivàn Andrèyevich would answer comfortably: "No; *I*

know the angle at which it will fall. I am outside it."

The only romantic detail of his life, known to everybody too, was his boundless admiration and devotion to Madame Ol'ènina: she was a charming elderly woman of society, mother of a large family where Krylòv was a *rodnòy* (родно́й), a beloved friend, everyone's "grandfather," admired author and petted child at the same time. This delightful friendship lasted for very many years.

There is a detail concerning his period of life in the flat above the Imperial Library, which I read in Russia long ago, but could not trace now amongst the bibliographical materials obtainable in England; so it should be regarded only as a thing which *could* have happened, because it is rather typical. Krylòv, as it would behove his constitution, was not indifferent to food. At one of the dinners with the Empress, who was very fond of him, Krylòv's friend whispered to him: "You eat enough for ten! Decline at least one of the courses—see how the Empress watches you, trying to find a chance of offering you something!"

"And what if she won't?"—Krylòv remarked, continuing to help himself to everything heartily.

One summer afternoon, lying on his eternal couch, he thought of the little pies (пирожки́), a very popular Russian dish, which his cook had meant to give him with his soup for dinner, but never did, as they were not ready in time. He called out for her, hoping that they might have got ready by-and-by. There was no answer. Imagination increased his

appetite, and he called out again and again—but silence was the only answer, the easy-going guardian of his household having followed her own inspiration to go and sit in the yard on the bench—that "club" of all Russian servants of past and present times. Appetite roused energy: Krylòv got up and walked through his unique "quarters" (казéнная квартúра) to the kitchen. There they were—two or three dozens of plump little pies, still simmering in a saucepan of goose-fat. Krylòv forked out one, another, a third—and finished them all. He enjoyed them very much at the moment; but the saucepan needed enamelling, and he fell frightfully ill. Thinking that he was dying (and this second half of the story is recorded in an authorized biography), he dragged himself to the Ol'ènin's home, and, dropping at the feet of his ideal love, said simply: "I told you I should come to die at your feet."

This leads me to a striking feature of his character which is proved by many facts. If some fancy entered Krylòv's mind, he would always take it up so energetically that the desired object was achieved: one wonders whether one has the right to call him lazy! Thus, he learned Greek *perfectly* in the course of his fifty-first and fifty-second years—not so much in order to study Æsop in the original as with the object of winning a bet that this could be done! The astonished friends who lost it found dozens of Greek books under his low, plain bed: it appears, he kept them there handy in the course of two years—to be studied leisurely and comfortably! (Betting and even gam-

bling had their charm over Krylòv. For nearly six years, just before thirty, he did hardly anything but gamble). The end of the Greek volumes was as quiet as was their appearance: The cook, seeing that her master had done with them, used them all up for lighting fires. When quite elderly (the exact age is not given) he also learned Italian and . . . playing the fiddle! He went one better: having once seen a Hindoo conjurer, he became fascinated by his art of throwing balls in such a manner that they formed a moving circle above his head. When some friends looked in to see Krylòv a fortnight later, they found him sitting on a carpet, throwing up and keeping on the move a dozen or two of bright balls which glittered in a circle over his head! Also, he would never miss a conflagration, and would get up in the middle of the night and walk any distance to see one.

He was extremely cautious in all he said in private life—a regular diplomat in that way—just satisfied with knowing his own mind; otherwise, the general respect and love which he enjoyed could not have been attained side by side with the success of his fables. But he was absolutely indifferent to his personal appearance, and would make himself tidy only on special occasions. Once at a very big dinner at the Ol'ènins' home, he appeared in a brand-new evening dress, straight from the tailor's, with all the buttons still wrapped up in tissue-paper! But he was such a pet with everybody that the brilliant company pretended they never saw it, and only his ideal love found a convenient moment to remove the unnecessary trimming.

On the seventieth birthday of the beloved fabulist and man a great festival was arranged in his honour. Mr. Ol'ènin was in the chair and Jukòvski spoke first for the artistic and literary world, from which three hundred men were present. Two sons of the Emperor Nicholas I. came to congratulate the hero of the jubilee personally. Prince V'àzemski, the poet, read his poem written for the occasion; the verses were bright, sincere, humorous, and full of feeling: the festival was represented in them as the silver wedding of "grandfather Krylòv" with his dear Muse; and "the couple" were greeted heartily in each refrain:

„Здра́ствуй съ ми́лою жено́ю, здра́ствуй дѣ́душка, Крыловъ!"

"Hail to thee and to thy dear wife, grandfather Krylòv!"

Shortly before his last illness two small but typical incidents occurred. One of them was a fire which broke out next door to the house where he lived. People rushed in to warn him. He quietly went out into the street, looked at it, and remarked with the quiet assurance of a connoisseur: "No need to stir."

The other was a packet of proofs from Paris: a long article was coming out about him, and the author asked him to insert whatever he liked into it.

"Let them write what they like," said Krylòv, and put it away.

He died from overeating himself, after all, at the age of seventy-six. The Emperor paid the expenses of his funeral (£900), the highest statesmen carried

his coffin from the cathedral to the cemetery,* and the crowds, containing devoted admirers of the poet from all classes of the population, filled the whole length of the Nevski Prospect—about three miles.

Yes; a regular grandfather—dear, and funny, and great. In spite of Lomonòsov's services in engendering Russian literature in the eighteenth century, it still walked on stilts until Krylòv placed it on the natural Russian soil. Thus prepared by him and by Jukòvski, it gave birth to the plant of Pùshkin's poetry, fresh and fragrant in its individual bloom.

In translating the fables I have allowed myself some of the liberty which the nature itself of a fable permits—namely, varying the length and sometimes even the number of lines, as the English phrasing and rhyming would command.

* The Russian custom is to carry the coffin by hand if there is anyone willing to do it.

THE MUSICIANS

A MAN invited once his neighbour[1]
To have a meal, but in his mind
He meant to treat him to a kind
Of higher feast for mind and heart:
He lured him in to hear his choir's home-
trainéd art.
The lads sent forth a burst of sound
As loud as they were able
In different keys,[2]—a dreadful Babel!—
All shouting to their heart's delight.
This made the poor guest's head go round
And caused his ears to ache.

"Have mercy, man!" he cried in woe,
From eating dinner quite prevented:
"What is there to admire?
Your choir
Bellows as if demented!"
"Precisely so,"
The happy host agreed:
"They make, perhaps, some funny sounds; but, then,
They are teetotallers—all splendid men!
And they behave like Saints, indeed."

As for myself, I'd rather have them drink,
But know their job, I think.

THE MONKEY[3] AND THE GLASSES

A MONKEY in old age found eyesight failing.
She heard the Humans say, while this she was bewailing,
That this is only half a grief:
Eyeglasses bring complete relief.

So, quick, in half a dozen pairs investing,
She sits her down, absorbed in testing:
Now sticks them to her crown, now strings them on her tail,
Now smells, now licks them—no avail!
"Confound them!" she exclaims: "'tis fools among my kin
Who trust the yarns that people spin.
All that they say about the glasses
Is lies: they are not worth a pin!"
Here, angrily their use denying,
The Monkey banged them on a stone
So that the glittering bits went flying!

A pity, but we've also the abuse of
Treating like that things we don't know the use of;
And when the ignorance in our mind
Is with conceit combined,
Then best of things have little chance:
Regarded with disdain, askance,
They're flung to winds, or left behind.

THE QUARTETTE

Monkey, the rogue, for mischief ever ready,
The Ass, the Goat, and Clumsy Teddy,[4]
Agreed to share in a quartette.
They got some books, a mellow 'Cello,
And alto, first, and second fiddle,
Foregathering on a lawn, the problem to unriddle
Which is the kind of art the world on fire to set.
Forthwith the bows went tearing madly,
Yet sounding very badly.
"Stop, comrades, stop!" calls out the Monkey:
"We're seated wrong! No wonder! Mr. Donkey,
You with your alto better face
Teddy-the-bass,

Whilst we two fiddles face each other.
Then will our music be no bother—
E'en woods and mounts shall dance and race!"
Seated anew, they now began again—
In vain!
"Halt! How to put it right I've recollected!"
The Ass directed:
"I'm sure we will get on
If we sit side by side."
So this was done:
They gravely followed Donkey's guide,
But harmony would not abide!
Here, trying to be clever,
They, more than ever,
Disputed how to sit to reach a fine display.
A Nightingale by chance did fly their way,
So all addressed her in their doubt and trouble:
"Be kind," they said, "and do thy patience double
In order to arrange our set:
We've music, instrument—and yet we vainly fret!
Tell us, how shall we sit
To make our talents fit?"
"It needs some knowledge and a more refinéd ear,"
She told them here,
"Musicians to become. Whatever your positions,
My friends, I fear, you'll never be musicians!"

THE ELEPHANT AND THE PUG[5]

An Elephant was by his owners taken
Along our streets, for show;
And, since he's quite a queer old beast, you know,
A mooning throng his presence did awaken.[6]
When all at once a little Puggy ran
To meet them round a corner, and began
A violent attack of barking, squeaking,
And dashing at him, seeking,

Apparently, to have a fight!
"Shame, neighbour! Stop that silly row!"
A collie says: "He's not your match. See, your bow-wow
Is weak and hoarse, and in despite
He moves on in his might
Quite undisturbed and slow,
And pays no heed to all your barking."
"Puph!" Puggy snorted in remarking,
"'Tis just what is encouraging and pleasing
That I, without a moment's fighting,
Can earn much fame through simply teasing
And railing so!
The dogs no more have chance of slighting
My size: Now 'twill be always: 'Lo!
Isn't our Puggy strong! Just hark—
At Elephants she'll bravely bark!'"

THE CAT AND THE COOK

A cook who could both cook and read[7]
Once left his kitchen with some speed
A visit to the pub to pay:
His *kum*[8] has died; and he that very day
In honour of the dead must drain a glass
(A pious custom ne'er to be let pass);
While, taking all precautions 'gainst the mice—
To keep at home the victuals nice—
He left the cat.
But what did he behold on having calmed his yearning
And to his place returning?
On the mat
There lay some scanty remnants of a pie,
And Tom the Cat,
Most cosily ensconced behind a cask
Enjoyed the task
Of finishing a chicken fry.

"Ah, greedy beast! Ah, knavish soul!" did bawl
The cook as he began his condemnation:
"Aren't you ashamed to face this wall
(Besides our local population),
As runs the saying?"
Meanwhile Tom ate and purred, no fear displaying.
"Why, hitherto your honest reputation,
Your modesty, a leading star did shine!
And now—my word, what base decline!
Now all our neighbours will be telling:
'Tom is a knave, Tom is a thief;
Tom should not be allowed in cook-house, dwelling,
Or yard: I would as lief
Hear a wild wolf in sheep-fold yelling!
He is the scourge, the pest, the peril of our place! . . ."
(Tom ate, unmindful of disgrace.)
Our orator, so fond of high-flown phrases,
Was lost amongst their mazes.
And while he gave himself to that
The fry was cleared by Tom the Cat.

If I might be this cook's adviser,
I'd give him this to think about:
Than talk and uproar, 'tis much wiser
To fetch all purring thieves a clout.

X THE CAT AND THE NIGHTINGALE[o]

A NIGHTINGALE came to the worst of luck:
A cat did tuck
Her in his paw, and so,
Pressing her still quite gently,
He thus addressed her kindly, reverently:
"Sweet darling! High and low
There rings a rumour
Which certainly does humour
Thee:

They say, no one can see
A difference 'twixt thee and the best singers.
Fox, my *kumà*, declares that every shepherd lingers
Amongst the woods when thou begin'st to sing
And makest the hill-side with thy singing ring.
Now, do not tremble so! I do not feel
The least desire to make of thee my meal!
Just sing me something, and fly gaily
To copse and woodland steep.
I'm fond of music too, and daily
I purr myself to sleep."
Meanwhile, the Nightingale a breath could scarcely win
Within
The cat's claws. "Well?" was his demand.
"Pray, sing, if only just a little bit."
But Nightingale felt hardly fit
To sing: a chirp came—very weakish.
"Is this the art which makes thy name so grand
O'er forest-land?
I never thought thy voice would be so squeakish!
Are these the pure, clear notes that make them spin the tale
About the Nightingale?
I would not stand such sounds from any kitten!
"Nay, darling, now, I see,
Thy art is not what I call heavenly.
But yet thou might'st be nice for teeth to nip."
Thus was the singer smitten
And to the last bit eaten up,
That Cat might sup.

Shall I just give my tip?—In cat's claws' grip
The Nightingale has little chance of singing,
Sending her clear notes ringing.

DEMYÀN'S UHÀ[10]

"DEAR neighbour! Pray you, eat *uhà* galore!"
"Well, neighbour, I am bursting as it is."
"Never mind that; have more!
I swear that an *uhà* like this
Deserves all fame and glorious praising."
"I've had three platefuls." "Oh, that's not amazing!
You must not count them, 'pon my soul.
Now, to your health—and clear the bowl!
What an *uhà!* How hot and rich!
They look like gold—those clots of fatness which
Its surface clothe like glazing.
Now, just to please me, have a little more. . . .
A piece of bream, some roe, some sturgeon—I implore!
A spoonful only! (Wife! Bow to him—ask him, quick!)"
Thus our Demyàn would feast Fòka, his neighbour,
Not making it a treat, but painful labour.
Like hail the perspiration came down thick
From off the face of his poor guest;
But, with his last amount of zest,
He took another plateful—did his best—
And cleared the whole.
"Now, that's what I call fine! Upon my soul,
To me the ways of haughty folk are hateful. . . .
Well . . . just another plateful!"
On this, Fòka, poor guest—
However much he thought *uhà* to be the best
Of soups—at such unrest
Revolted:
He snatched in haste his belt and cap
And like a madman homeward bolted!
Since then, by no ill hap
Was he seen near
Where our Demyàn's *uhà* was likely to appear!

TWO DOGS.

A FAITHFUL mongrel, true in aim,
Barbòss by name,
Beheld one day his old companion
Joujou, the curly spaniel,
Reclining on a gorgeous cushion on the sill.
Barbòss approached her with a loving will:[11]
With tender feelings all but crying,
Beneath the window jumping,
With pleasure sighing,
His tail in joyance thumping,
He spoke with happy thrill:
"Well, well, Joujou!
How is life treating you
E'er since our masters took you to their mansion?
I'm sure, you can remember us together
Enduring hunger, stormy weather? . . .
What work claims now your whole attention?"
"'Tis sin to murmur when in pleasure;
My master loves me without measure,"[12]
Joujou replies.
"I live in comfort, I declare,
And eat and drink from silver ware;
I play with master; when I tire
I lounge on sofas to my heart's desire.
And how with you? I hope, full nice?"
—"I"—old Barbòss with yearning eyes,
With drooping nose and tail—
"I live just as before: the gale
And hunger, standing,
To master's house attending
And sleeping 'neath the fence in rain.
And if I bark, instead of kindly greeting,
I get a beating.

But what good luck has placed you here at all,
Joujou, who are so puny and so small,
Whilst I with zeal am bursting vainly?
What is your work?"—"'My work'? . . . You are ungainly!
Mainly"—
Joujou dropped with a sneer—
"I practise here
Walking on my hind legs and begging sweetly."

How many find their luck in walking neatly
On their hind legs and begging meetly!

THE KITE.

Just 'neath the clouds there soared a kite,
Observing from its height
Down in the vale a butterfly, he cried:
"Wilt thou believe, that I can hardly see thee?
Confess, I prithee,
That thou art filled with envy at my flight!"—
"I—envy? Not a bit.
Don't boast. There's no denying
Thou art chained fast, despite of flying.
That kind of goal
Is far from happiness, my wit.[13]
Whilst I,
Although not high,
Can fly
Free from the slightest tie.
Nor do I, with the aim of making people chatter
And flatter,
Spend all my life in clatter."

Жуковскій

VASÌLI ANDREYÈVICH JUKÒVSKI

ROMANTIC

1783—1852

"WELL, Russia is the limit!" exclaimed, not without appreciation, a delightful English friend of mine when our talk turned to the circumstances of Jukòvski's birth and childhood.

Indeed, there are many things that can happen only in Russia. Facts like those of Jukòvski's career could never take place in England, could never find their way into the English mind. Whether they, and a number of others of a similar nature, betoken a "lack of culture and morals" in Russia, or something different to that, is not for a Russian to decide.

But here is Jukòvski's story in a nutshell—probably interesting from an English point of view, although none of his Russian biographers has ever thought of dwelling on it:

Jukòvski was the child of a well-to-do landproprietor belonging to the Russian nobility, Bunin, and of his slave, a Turkish girl of sixteen. The child was born in the estate itself (near Tula, in the centre of Russia), and was whole-heartedly accepted into the family circle of Bunin by his own wife, a mother

of eleven children. The boy spent all his babyhood and childhood, up to the age of eleven, in the heart of the family, surrounded by everyone's love and care, which were lavished upon him. Officially the little Vasili was given "his father's name and surname," *Andrèyevich* and *Jukòvski*, by another man, an old friend of the Bunins (Andrèy Jukòvski), who lived with them permanently. The godmother of Bunin's illegitimate child was his married daughter, Mme. Yùshkov; her home in Tula was the centre of the intellectual and artistic life of the whole town. There the lovable and affectionate little Jukòvski spent three years, from eleven to fourteen, after which Mme. Yùshkov gave him all the chances of the best education, having sent him to the "University Pension for Nobles" in Moscow. The poetical and nobly romantic nature of the youth found there a most suitable soil for development, and, eventually, at the age of thirty-four, Jukòvski became first a reader and a teacher of Russian to the young Empress Alexàndra Feòdorovna (wife of Nicholas I.), and then tutor to her son, Alexander II. He was appointed to this responsible post when the heir to the throne was seven years old (1825), and remained with him till he was twenty-four. What is more, he was not merely a tutor, but became a personal friend of Alexander II. and of the whole Royal Family.

"An illegitimate son—a son of an unknown Turkish girl, of a slave—tutor to the heir to the throne, and a personal friend of the Royal Family? . . ."

Yes. Because he was also a man of education, of great poetic talent, of sincere idealistic aspirations, and of a generous, romantic nature. *These* were the circumstances that counted, and not the others; the others were merely an accidental detail.

National Russian psychology in this respect could not be crystallized in a clearer or simpler way. But I must add forthwith that Jukòvski also was a convinced monarchist and strictly orthodox; if these two features had been absent, then *none* of the rest would have counted at all.

A few other details give a characteristic tinge to the time and scenery:

The young slave Saha was not banished from the estate, and never suffered from anyone's vengeance, contempt, or jealousy; on the contrary, she remained in her place of a domestic servant, and, as such, enjoyed much love on the part of the whole family, as if nothing had happened. But neither was she freed or treated in any way differently from the other servants of the household. The masters were generous, which is clear enough, but it never occurred to them to regard her otherwise than as a dependent, voiceless servant, however much liked. The mother of their little favourite remained a slave, and had to behave as a slave. This illustrates the psychology of the old, old serf-owning Russia. . . . "Much water has flowed since," as the saying runs.

The melancholic element of Jukòvski's romantic nature is very likely to have been engendered by that one aspect of his childhood, concerning the

position of his mother. Quite early, even before he learned the facts of his birth, he experienced an instinctive attachment to the modest, beautiful girl Saha. She had the gift of calming his over-brimming spirit of child-like mischief by just a word and a quiet caress. A little scene described in the reminiscences of his childhood is so brightly tinctured with the hues of his surroundings that it tempts me to pen it here in a few outlines.

It was one of the beautiful hot summer mornings when the seven-years-old Vàsen'ka could not settle down to any occupation or play. He was an attractive and beautiful child, but far from industrious. He was just roaming about, at his will, all over the large premises, and presently found himself in one of the spacious empty reception-rooms. Like every other room in the house, it had one of its corners filled in with an ikon-stand; holy images of all kinds were fixed on it, standing, lying, and hanging. But the main and largest one was a painting of the Virgin, her face and hands only visible through the openings of the silver setting.* Those dark faces of the ikons, with large pensive eyes looking at you, more often than not attract an observing young mind. Jukòvski had some gift for drawing, which no one around him realized in those days. He stood for a while in the cool quiet of the room, gazing at the dark face with its established, orthodox kind of beauty; then he fumbled for a piece of chalk in the treasuries of his pockets, and, crawling along the shining bare floor,

* The *rìza* = dress, in Old Slavonic.

traced on it the main outlines of the ikon, magnified from one end of the room to the other. Having satisfied his artistic impulse, he left his creation as it was, and wandered into the room of Mme. Bunin. She was at her needlework, and he curled himself up in a large armchair, watching her and chatting.

Presently it was dinner-time. The "sewing girls" left their workroom, and on their way passed by the open door of the large reception-room. . . . In another minute they burst, in a body, into their mistress's room, highly excited, and interrupting each other's awe-inspired ejaculations:

"Reflected herself! . . ."

"Truly, mother mistress, *She* has reflected herself!"

"Life size!"

"Just like real, the gracious darling! . . ."

Mme. Bùnin lifted her eyes from her work.

"Who has 'reflected herself'? How? Where?"

"Our darling, our pleader, the Mother of God!* . . . In the large red drawing-room! . . . All the length of it! . . . Just looking up at you, our gracious one, like real! . . . Reflected herself to us mortals, forsooth!"

It sufficed Mme. Bùnin to glance at her little favourite, chuckling with laughter in the depth of his chair, to grasp the situation. She quietly explained it to the girls, and they withdrew, a little confused in their orthodox enthusiasm.

* "Mother of God"—Màt'er' Bòjya—is one of the two usual expressions in Russian for the Virgin. The other one is Bogoròditza = "the one who bore God."

It was the Turkish girl Saha, later in the day, who impressed the boy by her remark that it was wrong to play with sacred things.

In his childhood Jukòvski did not develop any capacities for learning; but it must be admitted that the first doses of knowledge were not offered to him in any attractive or easy manner. His first teacher, obtained for him from Moscow when the boy was six, was a tailor apprentice, German by birth. (Having a foreign artisan as a teacher was quite a common occurrence amongst our nobility in those days!) His manner of introducing his casual God-sent pupils into the world of the Russian alphabet very soon filled the little Jukòvski with disgust and horror, and the man was discarded. The adoptive father, A. G. Jukòvski, next tackled the task of teaching, and also failed. Following suit came the banishment of Jukòvski from the elementary school "for lack of capacities." And it was due entirely and solely to his life with the family of Mme. Yùshkov, his natural half-sister, from the age of eleven till fourteen, that the intellectual side of the boy's nature was suddenly and fruitfully awakened.

The next period of his life, the four years at the "University Pension" in Moscow, had a final influence on his development. That high school for "young nobles" was founded by the poet Heràskov on most refined, artistic, and sensible principles. It was *the* school in those days; the younger generation of the higher classes received there the groundwork of their enlightenment, and many literary names

were connected with it in the days of Jukòvski and the following ones (L'èrmontov was one of its pupils). The programme was too wide, in fact; it covered so many philological, philosophical, and moral subjects that it was impossible to study them all. But the general ideas of education were sound, and they remained for ever after at the bottom of Jukòvski's interest and capacities for educational work. A "Society of Lovers of the Russian Speech" was formed at the "Pension" in Jukòvski's days within its walls—the first student society in Russia—and Jukòvski was elected its first president; for he developed his philological and poetic gifts in the very first year of his studies. About that time Mme. Yùshkov died, and, struck by the loss, he wrote his first poem *Thoughts over a Tomb*, which for some time remained the keynote of his young Muse.

After his four years at the "Pension," Jukòvski tried the administrative career, but soon abandoned it and retired to the country, to live with his adoptive family. All these years, both at school and in private life, he continued writing poetry, and betook himself to translating poetry from the German, French, and English, passionately studying Western literature. He had a great gift for self-teaching, and attached much importance to self-development; with reference to his tutoring he used to say: "In teaching we learn." The first piece of art coming from his pen was Gray's *Elegy*—not merely translated, but rewritten in the light of his own spirit. The melancholy character of all his poetry of those years

corresponded to his subjective mood as well as to the general literary taste of his time. In private life he was suffering from the melodramatic lot of his unhappy love: the fair object of his very devout passion was not unresponsive, but she happened to be the child of Bùnin's youngest daughter. Jukòvski was her tutor for a long time, and became carried away not only by their refined literary studies, but also by the charm of his pupil. The mother of the young girl would not hear of her marrying the illegitimate son of her grandfather, and Jukòvski's most ardent love was doomed to shine for the rest of his life as a platonic light. The relations between the two remained beautiful, although the young lady married another man, and were known as a wonderful friendship which gradually became in Jukòvski's heart a kind of religious adoration. He did not marry till the age of fifty-eight (the daughter of his old friend, a German artist).

The other source which nourished the melancholy of his Muse was, as I said before, the literary taste of the period which just preceded his appearance on the field of literature. The novel was yet unknown in Russia, and society had just been shedding sincere tears over the first touching piece of fiction (Karamzìn's *Poor Liza*). Jukòvski's romanticism, with a touch of nationalism, cleared the taste of his contemporaries from the ridiculous sentimentality which sprung up first, and which swept the Russians off their feet in a wave of childish emotion; but he himself could not finally shake all its traces off his own mood, as they

coincided with his own romantic misfortune; he only clothed them with the daintiest veil of romantic imagination.

The young poet was under the first, burning spell of it when Napoleon appeared in Russia. Jukòvski joined the militia, and happened to be attached to the headquarters of the Field-Marshal Kutùzov. This brought him to the famous battle of Borodinò (1812). Sharing the elation of the whole land, he wrote his *Bard in the Camp of the Russian Warriors*, inspired by an all-embracing patriotism. The poem became widely known immediately; the fighting nation found it sweet to lend itself to its clear, sonorous ring, and to the infectious emotion that found a response through the length and breadth of the land. The fabulist Dmitrèvski read it to the Empress, and this led to Jukòvski's presentation at the Court, which in its turn resulted in his pedagogical career with the Royal Family.

This career, and personal friendship with the heir, Alexander II., absorbed him almost entirely until he retired in 1841, went abroad, married, and settled down in Germany, where he spent the last twelve years of his life. But he continued writing, partly prose (most of it in connection with his educational work, or meditations on various subjects) and partly translations from and imitations of the romantic literature of the West.

Jukòvski's lifetime was the richest period in the history of Russian poetry: Krylòv was still there, and Jukòvski spoke at his funeral in 1844; Kol'tzòv

was befriended by him in Yaroslàv when Jukòvski was accompanying the heir to the throne in his journeying all over Russia. Kol'tzòv's short life (1809-1842), and the still shorter one of L'èrmontov (1814-1841), that of the critic B'el'ìnski (1810-1848), of the inimitable "poet in prose" Gògol' (1809-1852), and of Pùshkin (1799-1837), who died in his presence—all of them passed within the period of Jukòvski's life. And other great knights of Russian literature were born before Jukòvski died. The philosopher, novelist, and critic, Chernyshèvski, in 1828; his follower, the political writer Dobrol'ùbov, in 1836; another political and social writer, P'ìsar'ev, in 1840; the poet of sparkling humour and breezy whimsical nationalism, Count Al'exèy Tolstòy, in 1817; the novelist Goncharòv in 1814; the creator of the national drama, Ostròvski, in 1824; Turgèn'ev in 1818; the untranslatable satirist, Shchedrìn, in 1826; the great poet of the *proletariat*, Nekràsov, in 1821; Dostoyèvski in 1822, and Tolstòy in 1828! . . .

Casting a retrospective glance on it takes one's breath away. Shall we ever have another successive chain of names like this? . . . The first "links with eternity" of the young modern pleiad are so different altogether. . . .

But we are very far from them yet in these simple chronicles, and it is time to return to old Jukòvski. Yes, he witnessed the glorious period of the first bloom of literature in his country, and he was a sincere friend and admirer of several of its representatives. But his responsible work at the Court,

blended with his deeply rooted political convictions, prevented him from being entirely at one with the spirit of the younger literary generation connected, in various degrees, with the centres of "free thinking" (in Russia this term is applied in the political sense as well).

It is most interesting to study everything that has been said about Jukòvski. Contrary to the harmony which Krylòv has struck from the pen of his critics of all times, Jukòvski makes them argue about him until now. B'el'inski's judgment was as follows:

"Nothing was farther from Jukòvski's poetry than Russian national elements. Perhaps it was a drawback, but at the same time it was a good quality. If nationalism had formed the fundamental feature of Jukòvski's poetry, he would not have been able to develop its romantic nature, and Russian poetry would have remained unfertilized by romanticism; therefore Jukòvski's efforts to become a national poet call forth a feeling of sadness, depicting a great genius who was trying, against his vocation, to follow a path strange to him."

This view has been now shared, now contradicted, by less weighty Russian critics ever since. Their opinions are void of interest to the English public; but here are two judgments expressed in English books by modern writers who, both of them, command a very great knowledge of Russian literature. One of them is Mr. Maurice Baring. Here is his opinion:

"Jukòvski,* in introducing German romanticism into Russia, paved the way for its death, and for the death of all exotic fashions and models; for he paved the way for Pùshkin to render the whole quarrel (the quarrel about romanticism) obsolete by creating models of his own, and by founding a national literature."

Again, the verdict coming from the pen of Mr. K. Walishewski covers those two just quoted in a somewhat striking way. He says:

"The glory of having introduced romanticism into Russia was claimed by Jukòvski. This was a mere illusion. Can my readers imagine a writer of the romantic school who winds up his literary career with a translation of the *Odyssey*? † . . . The great aims and objects attributed to the (then) new poetry escaped him entirely, and the scepticism of Byron and the irony of Heine, in later years, were both sealed books to him." And: "Jukòvski's lack of originality amounted to an entire absence of national sentiment."

However fundamental, in general, Mr. Walishewski's book is, I allow myself to disagree with him in this double denial of Jukòvski's immense services to Russian literature. Personally I agree on that point neither with the Russian nor with the Polish critic, but with the English one. Only, I would go a step farther in this direction. Although romanticism

* I spell the name according to my own conception of the transliteration problem. Mr. Maurice Baring spells Zhukovsky.

† Why not?

was a short-lived school in Russia, and soon yielded its place to realism which has since proved to be *the* true element of Russian art, yet Jukòvski ought to be acknowledged both as a romantic and as one of the first national poets: not quite the first, though, because Krylòv has picked up the types and subjects of Russian life *first*, while Pùshkin did it *best*, taking the brush out of the hands of his forerunner, and using the same colours in the unimpeachable manner of a genius.

"Russia had no Medieval Ages of her own: Jukòvski has given them to us," is B'el'ìnski's clear and right judgment. But Jukòvski also appears to have been the first of our writers who, with great keenness, collected all sorts of first-hand materials of our folk-lore; and although Krylòv's fables were Russian throughout (even when derived from foreign origin), they were *fables*. Jukòvski was the first to introduce romantic, fantastically poetic chords of national hue when he introduced graceful ballad and elegy into Russian poetry.

Nor can I see how one can deny romanticism to a poet who was carried away by the elements of the Western poetry, rooted in the subjects of knight-hood, of legendary, mystic, subjective themes, of noble passions and sufferings speaking from the depths of tradition. It was Jukòvski who has masterfully reincarnated in the Russian speech Byron's *The Prisoner of Chillon*, Schiller's *Maid of Orleans* and all his best ballads, Moore's *Paradise and the Peri*, Maghabarati's *Nal and Diamaianti*,

and Firdusi's *Rustem and Zorab* (the last two via Ruckert's German version).

Mr. Walishewski calls Jukòvski "a great poet who never made his mark, but who was something better than a genius—a kind and generous and helpful friend."

I cannot help calling this verdict an undeserved under-valuation. Forsooth, I prefer Russian literature as it is—with the genius of Jukòvski, Pùshkin, L'èrmontov, Krylòv, Kol'tzòv, Dostoyèvski, Tolstòy, etc., towering above the nation—to what it would have been if all these carriers of Heaven's torch were "better than genius—generous and helpful friends"! Surely, Russia counts millions of the latter; and to pat Jukòvski on his back with such praise is, to my mind, unfair. Every poet, above all, interests us inasmuch as he approaches genius, even if he had only "a spark" of it given to him; as long as it is his own, genuine spark, he can kindle responding lights in people's hearts, and that is where we cherish him.

After writing these lines, I looked once more through my literary materials about Jukòvski and by Jukòvski, and in his correspondence I just came across a paragraph which made me rejoice: Jukòvski endorses in his own words what I just happened to express as my individual opinion. In a letter to Gògol' he discusses the opposing views of two Russian poets. D'erjàvin said: "Let the satirist gnaw me for my words, but he must respect me for my acts"; while Pùshkin believed in a "poet's words *being*

his acts." Entirely agreeing with Pùshkin, Jukòvski adds:

"The self-respect of a poet would be deeply hurt if he himself or a critic should find him to be a feeble poet, but a respectable man."

There is another point about Jukòvski on which opinions differ. When he became first a teacher of Russian to the young Empress, and then tutor of the heir to the throne, many of his contemporaries declared: "The bard has turned into a courtier." Even Pùshkin sent out a pointed arrow in a couple of lines, untranslatable because the poignancy rests with the Russian word for the little stick with which the elementary teachers in the olden days used to point out the letters of the alphabet; this word is ukàzka, and Pùshkin said that "the bard has found his way into the Palace with his ukàzka." But, then, there were very few people whom Pùshkin would leave unstamped with a bitter epigram (we shall come to that point in due time)! Mostly they well deserved these decorations, which remained glued to them for their lifetime. But in the case of Jukòvski it was not fair. In 1815 the Empress, who kept a watchful eye on Jukòvski since she heard his *Bard in the Camp of Russian Warriors*, wrote to Count Uvàrov: "J'avais de grand projets sur Mr. Jukòvski. Dites le lui et engagez le à mon nom à hâter son retour." Hearing of which Jukòvski wrote in a private letter: "Those *grands projets* frighten me: are they not preparations to imprison my Muse?" And he accepted the post of reader and teacher only

after his second presentation at the Court and a private stay with the Royal Family for three days. The grace and simplicity of manners and the intellectual atmosphere in the midst of which he found himself conquered him; while the Empress's thorough knowledge of Western literature soon turned into a point of great interest in common and of mutual help to her and her enthusiastic teacher. Jukòvski instructed her in the Russian language with the passionate love of an artist for its genuine beauty. And when Alexander II. became Jukòvski's pupil as well, the refined intercourse naturally resulted in the poet's finding himself "at home" with the Royal Family. But he never became "at home" with the Court, and never approached the world of intrigues and ambitions; more than often he acted in a manner very much unlike that generally attributed to a courtier. For instance, notwithstanding the fact that Nicholas I. before his accession was the only member of the Royal Family who did not approach Jukòvski on friendly grounds, the young teacher did not hesitate to plead with him for the Decembrists at the very beginning of his reign.

Later on Jukòvski "bought out" from prison the Ukrayna poet Shevchènko, succeeded in shortening L'èrmontov's days of banishment in the Caucasus and in lessening the hardships of Pùshkin's banishment in the depths of the country; he freed his own serfs, and is likely to have sown in the mind of his royal pupil the first idea of the emancipation of the serfs.

He was certainly most idealistic and humanitarian in his ideas of monarchism, and his scheme of education for Alexander II. was founded on the same principle which he embodied in his verses written to the Empress on the occasion of the birth of the heir. His conviction is that an autocrat "should not forget on his high-level road the greatest of his ranks: a Man; should live through the greatness of his People; for weal of all, forget his own; and count his acts, in humility, when acclaimed only by the free voice of his country."

Later on, imbuing the young mind of his pupil with his own ideas, he wrote to Alexander (II): "There exists no love of a People for its Tsar' without the Tsar's love for the People."

This sounds very different from what Voltaire wrote to Frederick the Great: "I fear most of all that you have not yet learned to despise men sufficiently thoroughly. The millions of featherless two-legged beasts inhabiting the earth are as far from your person as earth is from the sky."

Nevertheless, Jukòvski was a monarchist to the core, although of his own romantic kind. Speaking of most of the Russian poets and writers, it is difficult to leave out their political convictions: we regard them as having more chances to "speak out" than ordinary mortals have; therefore there has always been so much ardent discussing about, and even disagreement between, our writers. They have been regarded as a kind of prophets possessing one magic wing—either a "right" or a "left" one! Hence

the boiling passions of educated society when an author would change his political views (Pùshkin, Dostoyèvski; Tolstòy—in his own way). And, considering the accusations which are not infrequently hurled at Jukòvski, it may be but fair to quote some lines from his numerous writings in prose (meditations, as it were, covering a very large scale of serious subjects). The following quotations reflect the gist of the writings on "Autocracy," "Despotism," "Sovereign and Humanity," "The State," "Education," and of some letters to his prominent contemporaries.

"Every Government ought to hold justice as its motto. What is a crime for a private person is bound to be a crime if committed by a Government. . . . In the State institutions lies a Sovereign's freedom; autocracy is not an administrative power, but one of thought only."

"The measures of our Government are aiming at closing the doors into Europe which Peter the Great has opened for us. For that end we are made to pay money for our right of travelling, and God knows what will come next (written in 1845). It is impossible to force people to love their country. By forcing them to stay in it they are made to long to leave it. As false a method, as religious intolerance is. Make it nice for us to stay at home, and bravely fling the doors open! Don't hinder anyone to live as he likes for himself: then he will live for all. Let everyone be happy and restful at home; then he will value the peace and happiness of the State.

Respect the sanctity of family life; then the sanctity of the State will be acknowledged. Altogether, the weal of all ought to be founded on the weal of each. . . . Guard the law, and you will generate loyalty."

" Autocracy is the highest and yet the simplest form of supreme power if it corresponds to the true meaning of the word itself: autocracy (самодержáвie) means 'the ruling of others and the controlling of self.' It combines power over others with the power of will, and if devoid of one of these it ceases to exist. . . . The Eastern despotism is quite different from the Russian autocracy. Only the Russian nation understands autocracy! . . . The Russian Tsar', understanding this attitude in all its vastness, shall not be proud, but humble, facing the greatness of the ideal which history and fate have implanted in the heart of his people. . . . An autocrat has no right to be self-willed: mistaking one's own will for the Higher Will is blasphemy. Christian humility is the crown of autocracy," etc.

Jukòvski thought worlds of England, as of " the most organized of all States, an example amongst nations standing on the highest step of earthly power . . . an island enjoying perfect weal, leaving out Ireland!" But he hated Lord Palmerston's politics passionately.

After the return of Alexander I. from Paris, Jukòvski expressed in a letter to an editor what he thought with regard to the furious attacks of the German Press against Russia:

"The Russian Tsar' has no need of Europe as his ally: he is strong at home. He will not go out for any unnecessary conquests (as long as Constantinople is left alone). . . . Russia does not need Germany, neither as a guardian nor as booty. . . . Russia is now entering a great new era of her existence. The military period—for the end of safety—is completed: now begins the peaceful development—for the sake of the country's inner weal. This inner development can be achieved only by means of autocracy. Autocracy is Russia's living, historical road, laid out for her by Providence."

* * * * * *

The Bard in the Camp of Russian Warriors was on the threshold between the dying world of pseudo-classical ode and the engendering romantic poem. It still contained allusions to cuirasses and shields and arrows, which were as distant from Borodinò then as they are now from Verdun. It was most glorifying, most grandiloquently patriotic; but it would be certainly cruel to put this piece of true inspiration at the door of any calculated foresight of a career-maker! At that moment Russia was burning with an orthodox elation of monarchial patriotism. The personality of the young Tsar' Alexander I. was tempting to artistic inspiration. L'èrmontov has described Borodinò in a masterful military-patriotic poem (speaking by the mouth of an old soldier), even when the first wave of enthusiasm has already passed. This wave can be distinctly traced even in Tolstoy's *War and Peace*. Jukòvski's *Bard* has a

great poetical value. In spite of the "shields and arrows," it is written in a fine, pure Russian speech which was still a great novelty in those days—just a path leading up to Pùshkin. It was a milestone pointing the arrival of the new, of the *subjective* poetry. Notwithstanding its exclusive element of glorification, one does not think of these verses, covering several pages, as of an ode at all. Its text conveys the idea of a toast in honour of things which, obviously, overfill the Bard with enthusiasm: he "lifts his goblet" in succession.

> "This goblet—in the name of those
> Who were our leaders in the past!"

And old Russian warlike Princes are hailed, followed by Peter the Great and Suvòrov.

Then follow the lines expressing a Russian's love for his country:

> "This goblet—to our Motherland,
> Its hills and meadows kindred!" etc.
> . . . . . .
> "To thee this goblet, Russian Tsar',
> And let thy power flourish!" etc.
> . . . . . .
> "This goblet—to our warriors great,
> Who share with us their glory!" etc.
> . . . . . .
> "And this—to warriors fallen dead,
> Who will no more rejoin us!" etc.

Here follows a long roll of the heroes of Borodinò, each of them glorified in his turn:

> "This goblet full—to Vengeance great," etc.

The last toast is in the name of each man's fair beloved: "This brimful goblet, Love, to thee!"—etc.

It is translated below, being the best part of the poem and the least connected with names which would mean nothing to an English mind. Naturally enough, it sounds to us frightfully old-fashioned; but both this poem and *Svetlàna* were written in 1812, and then they sounded very new and very breezy.

Svetlàna is considered the best of Jukòvski's original ballads, although it is, they say, also inspired by a German one, and reminds one of Keats's *Eve of St. Agnes*. But when Jukòvski wanted to make a subject Russian, he knew what thoughts and what words to choose. *Svetlàna* sounds purely Russian throughout, beginning with the girl's name itself—an ancient, very handsome, stately name emanating light (it corresponds to Lucy), as *sv'et* means light. In the given instance it sheds light on the superstitions connected with fortune-reading. And few things are more attractively simple than the freshness of its speech and structure. It was very difficult to convey as much as half of its charm in translation. The shortness of the lines allows no room for rephrasing, which is often absolutely unavoidable in translating, as our two languages are so unlike each other. The meaning of the first stanza will be probably dark in its English apparel, but in the original it contains nothing except mentioning a mere succession of things which used to be done in great earnest, and are still done—by some seriously, by others for fun; we used to enjoy them on the eve of the 6th of January in our school days (with the exception of "weeding" the snow, which I never

came across). The date itself (6th of January), for the "most reliable" fortune-reading, corresponds to the English Twelfth Night; but I am told that Hallow-e'en used to be the night for fortune-telling in Scotland, as Burns also suggests.

To the greatest relief of a translator, Jukòvski modestly declares his ballad to be "wanting in rhyme" (in Russia it is not rhyme only, but *sklad*, rhyming with *ballad*, which means the whole technical structure of a poetical work)! He may well have omitted this apology, needless to say; but it can be applied to my translation most adequately, especially as I allowed myself to disregard the rhyming of the first and third, fifth and seventh, lines in each stanza.

The Skylark has irresistibly suggested itself to me for translating, as a contrastic little thing to Wordsworth's and Shelley's poems. There are no beautiful meditations in the manner in which Jukòvski has approached the subject; he himself is absent from the verses, but the Skylark is there! Jukòvski lifts the reader to the little bird's point of view, and does this so lightly that one cannot help repeating to oneself these sunny twelve lines when one hears the first skylark in the spring.

But, perhaps, the clearest idea of Jukòvski's poetry in general can be conveyed by quoting just these two lines he wrote when thinking of days of happiness:

> "Do not repeat in grief, 'They're gone!'
> But say with gratefulness, 'We had them!'"

FROM THE "BARD IN THE CAMP OF RUSSIAN WARRIORS"

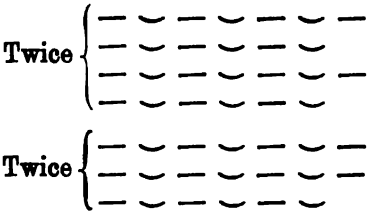
⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ —
⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑

This brimful goblet, Love, to thee!
Amid the fighting gory,[1]
Throb, comrades, with a sacred glee:
Love is at one with Glory.
He who possesses life's delight
Of knowing Love's emotion,
Whom heart and mind together plight,
Flies, burning with devotion,
To greatest deeds and tests amain,
He knows no fear abating;
What is there he could not attain
When sweetest prize is waiting?
Ah! lasting thought of her who is
Our joy, our friend for ever!
Her soul's pure voice we never miss,
We lose her vision never:
She on the standard flutters high,
She's close to us in battle,
Her voice resounds in camp's array
Through rest or restless rattle.
Attempt, bold foe, to grasp the shield
That from her was received—
A sacred vow burns on it, gilt:
"Love will not be outlived."
Oh, dear delight of secret dreams!
Beyond the bluish distance
Our fair shines mid angelic beams,
Lone in her sad existence;

Her soul in prayer she doth bow,
Weeping, with anguished presage
She longs for tidings—fears them—how
Will run their bearer's message? . . .
She thinks: "When will this parting gloom
End in the words of greeting?"
Come hither, hour of perfect bloom,
Replace the pain with meeting!
Friends! our most blissful lot is this:
Our kindred to deliver.
And if our fate in battle is
To fall, we shall not quiver.
In hour of mortal pain, we shall
Repeat the name beloved;
Our light of earthly life will dwell
With us, in bliss, above it;
Her love and loveliness our soul
Will carry with us thither . . .
O friends, death does not win the whole:
There's life where passions wither!

SVETLÀNA

A Ballad



Once upon a Hallow-e'en
Girls were fortune-reading:
Throwing shoes outside the gates
And the snowflakes weeding;
Went to overhear the talk,
Lurking at the windows,
Fed the fowls with counted corn,
Melted wax on cinders;
In a bowl of water clear
Put their emerald earrings dear,
Pretty trinkets golden;
Spread with care white linen cloth,
Stately chanting glees, in troth
With the custom olden.

Dim and doleful looks the moon
Through the mist of winter;
Our Svetlàna finds no fun
In the games to tempt her.
" Why so sad and silent, girl ?
Speak, and join our laughter !
Hark to glees, find by thy ring
What betides hereafter !

" Sing, fair beauty, do not frown:
' Blacksmith, forge a golden crown,
Forge a ring untainted.
With that crown I shall be wed,
By that ring I shall be led
Round the table sainted.' "[2]

" But how can I join the glee?
Fled is my heart's gladness;
Sure, to die my fate will be,
Pine away in sadness.
Now a year has glided by,
News of him ne'er bringing;
Yet he only makes life bright,
Sets my heart a-singing.
" Where art thou, beloved? where?
Can it be thou dost not care,
Me so lonely leaving?
Ardent is my tearful prayer.
Guardian angel! Wilt thou hear
And allay my grieving? . . ."

In the living-room[3] a cloth
Oaken table covers;
Waxen candle, looking-glass,
Table laid for lovers.
" Now, Svetlàna, come and see;
Sit thee here demurely.
Steadfast gaze into the glass,
And at midnight, surely,
Faithful mirror will reflect
Thy intended: with respect,
With affection proper,
He will knock, will pass the door
(Bolts and bars clash to the floor),
And sit down to supper."

So, alone, Svetlàna fair
Sits and looks affrighted,
Mid the silence all around
In the mirror lighted,
Wherein all except her face
Lurks in dimness darkling.
Flickers faint the candlelight,
Now obscure, now sparkling. . . .
Our Svetlàna does not dare
E'en to move. Her wearied stare
Fears to look behind her. . . .
Spluttered up the bluish flame,
Cricket chirruped low and tame,
Midnight's sure reminder.

Hardly brave enough to breathe,
On her elbow leaning—
Suddenly a gentle knock
Hinted secret meaning. . . .
And, behind her, in the glass,
She beholds through darkness
Someone's eyes from blackest depths
Stare with glaring starkness.
Breathless, she can clearly hear
Lover's whisper at her ear,
Sounding sweet within it:
" I am here, my beauty fair;
Heaven now has heard thy prayer,
For thy tears did win it."

With his look and warm embrace
She was met, round starting:
" Light of life ! my precious joy !
Now there is no parting !
Let us drive to church at once:
Ready for our wedding,
Marriage chants are being sung,
Lights their radiance shedding."

Her reply—a tender[4] glance.
Without wasting time or chance,
They go forth together
'Cross the yard; there, at the gate,
Steeds in great impatience wait,
Chafing silk and leather.

Hardly had the fated pair
Time to mount the sledges—
Off they dashed. From horses' hoofs
Snow flew o'er the hedges.
Troika flies. . . . All round is bare.
Steppe and snow bedim her.
Round the moon a ring of mist,
And the plains just glimmer.
Our Svetlàna feels her heart[5]
With a dark foreboding smart. . . .
"Speak, my falcon daring!"
But, depressed and pale, her lord
Never utters half a word,
At the moonlight staring.

Ruffling deep the humps of snow,
Fly the horses madly.
Suddenly a lonely church
Flashes past, set sadly
By the road-side. Door's flung wide
By a gust of weather. . . .
Censer lights and incense smoke—
Mourners pressed together—
Midmost a black coffin stands—
Drawling loud, the pop[6] commands:
"Be thou turned to ashes! . . ."
Our Svetlàna shakes with fear—
Mute and pale her sweetheart dear—
On the troika dashes!

And a blizzard rises high,
Snowflakes blind the lovers.
Foul-famed raven, flapping nigh,
Screams and o'er them hovers:
" Grief ! Misfortune !" hears the girl,
And the sentient horses
Prick their ears and shake their manes,
Straining all their forces.
Far afield a feeble light
Quavers through the storm and night:
Snow-hid hut doth beckon,
Promising safe peace and rest;
And the horses, all abreast,
Reach it, hot, foam-flecken.

Here they are. And all at once
They were gone for ever—
Horses, bridegroom, sledge, as though
They existed never.
Left there lonely, in the dark,
Parted from her lover,
Stood Svetlàna all in dread,
Blinding blast above her.
To go home there was no chance,
And the light seemed to entrance. . . .
With a prayer she made her
Sign of holy cross and tapped. . . .
Creaked the hinges, rust o'er-lapped—
Soft, the door obeyed her.

What was there ? A coffin, too,
With a white pall dighted,
Saviour's ikon at its feet,
With a candle lighted.
Poor Svetlàna ! where art thou ?
Whose this lifeless dwelling ?
Dreadful silence binds its lord,
Some dread secret quelling.

But she entered, and, prostrate,
Prayed to Christ. She knew her fate
Was in Heaven's keeping.
Her baptismal cross in hand,
Crouching by the ikon-stand,
There she waited, weeping.

Ceased the storm. Now all is peace.
Faint the candle flickers;
Now sends out a scanty light,
Now just feebly blickers.
All enwrapped in deadly sleep;
Not a sound nor mutter . . .
Hark! What was it? . . . Soft and bright
Came a quiet flutter:
And Svetlàna now beholds
Bright-eyed pigeon: he unfolds
Wings of snowy whiteness,
And on her upheaving breasts
Spreading them, he gently rests
With a soothing lightness.

And again no sign of life . . .
Is her eyesight erring?
Does she see the hidden corpse
'Neath its cover stirring? . . .
Winding-sheet glides down. The dead,
Nightmare-like and ghostly
Is disclosed; a crown he wears,
Eyes are lidded closely.
Then she sees him move and try
To unfold his arms. . . . A cry
Parts his lips, heartrending,
Striking her with horror deep. . . .
But th' white pigeon does not sleep.
Watchful and defending!

Spreading out his graceful wings,
Up he flutters whitely,
On the corpse's chest alights. . . .
Ghastly and unsightly.
Robbed of power, it gave a howl,
Cast a thunder-laden[7]
Glance in falling—gnashed its teeth
At our trembling maiden.
Now the lips were pale and still,
And the eyes, dead, glazed, and chill,
Could no more provoke her.
But—dear Lord! . . . Svetlàna knew
In the dead her lover true. . . .
"Ah!"—and this awoke her.

Facing her, the mirror stood.
Through the lacy curtain
Rays of sunrise found their way,
Homely, bright, and certain.
Flapping loudly, with his song
Cock the morn was greeting;
Only poor Svetlàna's mind
Horror still was heating.
"What a fearful dream, forsooth!
Sure, my life will ne'er run smooth,
Dark must be my morrow!
What awaits me? What can be
In the future left for me?
Joy, or hopeless sorrow? . . ."

She with heavy pain of heart,
Sitting at the casement,
Saw through fleecy mist the road
Stretching to effacement.
Pink the morning haze; the snow
Shining-bright appearing. . . .
Hark! some tinkling troika bells
Sounded dainty . . . nearing. . . .

Wingèd was the sledges' flight.
Whirling snow, into her sight
Flew a troika fleetly!
Nearer—halting at the gate—
Through it, stately and elate,
Walked her lover featly!

What about thy dreadful dream?
Here thou hast thy lover!
All, Svetlàna, as before
Thou mayst now discover.
Parting wrought no change in him:
Former love shines clearly
In his eyes, and on his lips[8]
Ev'ry word sounds cheer'ly.
Holy temple—open now!
Fly to Heaven, sacred vow,
Heart's faith firm to link ye!
Gather all, both old and young,
Now to join in happy song:
"Long life!" Glasses clink ye!

Well, my gracious hearer, smile
At my ballad haunting!
Many wonders live in it,
But in rhyme 'tis wanting.
Happy to have made thee smile
Glory I am shunning.
Fame's like smoke, they say—The world
Is a judge most cunning.
While the simple moral here
Is—no dreadful fate to fear,
But in Heaven's making
Leave our life. God's law is true:
Earthly gloom to dreams is due,
Joy lies in the waking.

Do not in these dreadful dreams,
Dear Svetlàna, languish. . . .
Thou, Creator, be her shield!
Let not wound of anguish
Touch her, nor on her the shade
Of disquiet linger.
Like a clear day is her soul;
Let misfortune's finger
Fleet above her. As revealed
'Gainst the background of a field
Shines a pleasant river,
So let all her life be bright,
And, as erst, let all delight
Be her friend for ever.

THE SKYLARK

⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ —
⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑

The forest caught the glow of spring,
A fleecy mist rose o'er the meadows,
And now the lark began to sing
His early song above the shadows.
A sparkling speck in azure height,
He sings,[9] his voice with rapture ringing:
"'Tis of the spring that I am singing—
Young spring arising in her might!
I am so happy, feel such joyance,
Such airy boundlessness, such buoyance!—
God's whole world lies beneath me fair:
To sing Him is my little share."

Александр Пушкинъ.

ALEXANDRE SERGÈYEVICH PÙSHKIN

SINGER OF REALITY

1799—1837

THE literature referring to Pùshkin produces the impression of an inundation. Numbers of essays, books, and booklets have been written with the purpose of explaining and interpreting, or finding faults with, or justifying Pùshkin, although B'el'ìnski, as long ago as in the poet's lifetime, has given the clearest and the most exhaustive analysis of Pùshkin's works. All scholars of Russian poetry, without exception, accompany their research works by the modest statement that "it is almost an impertinence to speak about Pùshkin, who has already called forth so much contradiction." In spite of this—not being freed by the gods from the desire to say what I, too, think of Pùshkin—I am not going to miss my chance! Who knows, perhaps my point of view will bring Pùshkin nearer to an English reader's heart than the profound seas of philosophizing which are so natural in Russia both to the minds of the critics and of the reading public.

The Russians have a passion for "digging in the soul" (копáться въ душѣ) of their own and in that of others! In ordinary life this greatly adds to its

interest, that is true; but it does not give much chance to poets when they are far away from any conscious weaving of profound revelations. In their case every word is brought into the lime-light and put under a microscope—in search for a hidden, extra-deep meaning which is bound to disclose some fundamental, immovable feature of their psychology. To say nothing of L'èrmontov, this system applies very well to T'ùtchev amongst our classics, while our modern poetry revels and indulges in hinting at the Unknown. . . . When, for instance, absolutely baffled by the " depths " of V'acheslàv Ivànov, I confessed about it to two Russian women who lately arrived from Moscow (typical representatives of the best Russian *intelligentzia*), they, most lively, explained to me that " no one understands V'acheslàv Ivànov ! . . . There is just one professor in Moscow who does, and everybody goes to him in order to have V'acheslàv Ivànov's revelations disclosed and explained !" When a really powerful flashlight is thrown on a *really* exceptional mind—such as Merejkòvski's on L'èrmontov—this can be called almost epoch-making, even if you do not agree with it. But the point with regard to Pùshkin is, that no one could be more delightfully human, clear, sincere, impulsive, vital and vivifying—no one could possibly be further from any artfulness, from any posing, from any consciously planned effects—as well as from " digging " in his own soul ! His genius is the unconscious flair of an artist who grasps the essential features of reality—sees their beauty, and reincarnates it because he cannot help doing so; he was

just of the earth, earthy, in the most beautiful sense of the word! If you wish to approach this kind of genius, do not grope about for the obscure. Some of the Russian modernists declare that Pùshkin was not sufficiently of an "echo" as a real poet should be; while most of the educated people are in such an awe of admiration for his depth and power that they sincerely think it almost a crime to dare to judge about him! Neither of these standpoints seem right to me: *Pùshkin accepted life open-heartedly, and one should approach him open-heartedly.* How inhumanly stiff seem to me those thunderous criticisms which were hurled at his head as he dashed to meet everything that struck his heart and imagination in the course of his short life! . . .

As a boy of nine he was already carried away by the atmosphere of his father's home, which was saturated with the flighty, sparkling elegance of the then modern French *littérature des salons*, and wrote French verses of that kind, hardly worse than did the two literary bon-vivants, the admirers of chic mentality, his father and uncle. The boy revelled in the realm of his father's library at home, especially Plutarch, Voltaire, Rousseau, and Molière, and was, at the age of twelve, a real connoisseur of French Literature. He wrote comedies in French and acted them before his sister, who was his friend, critic, and audience combined. To his parents he seemed rather a troublesome creature, and gave them a hot time from the age of seven till twelve! But, in the usual way of Russian

homes, the child was always allowed to be present in the drawing-room and dining-room, which usually teemed with literary and artistic people and with aristocratic foreign emigrants. There was no business, no work, and even no real love for country life in that typical country-house of nobles of those days. But there was boundless hospitality, disorderliness, whimsical jollity, and revelling in literary wit of erotic and bacchanalian nature. Pùshkin's uncle died with a volume of Béranger in his hands. It was very typical, too, that, after giving the boy's mind all that sort of food, his parents grew indignant with his temperament, and very nearly locked him up in a Jesuit college! Pùshkin learned his Russian from his interesting grandmother, and mainly from his nurse, whom he later on called his first Muse that rocked his cradle, the friend of his youth, and the only comrade in the days of his exile. She was that delightful type of a genuine Russian nurse—a simple but wise and artistic woman to whom all the world of the folk-lore was a familiar home; and it was the dwelling of the young poet's heart in that "home" with her that resulted later on in his writing the famous fairy-tale poems. This friendship was the true and lasting joy of Pùshkin's life; Arìna Rodiònovna would not leave him when freedom came to all the serfs, and died when her nursling was at the zenith of his fame (1827).

From the age of twelve till seventeen Pùshkin was at the "Lyceum," then just opened at the Tsàrskoye Sèlò with the purpose of making diplomats out of young nobles. It was a strange school! The man who

was appointed its director soon died, and neither his follower nor the rest of the staff knew how to manage the thirty young inmates of the diplomatic nursery. A jovial anarchy settled within its walls. The youngsters of the nobility only reflected the tenor of their parents' society. It was a whirlwind of anacreontic self-abandonment! Wine-parties, amourettes whenever possible in the surrounding parks, enthusiasm of comradeship—and passion for literature. The latter was as genuine as youth itself; most certainly it did not take the form of class-work, but the young boys would be engaged in writing stories instead of playing games, and get intoxicated at their night-gatherings, not with punch only, but also with poetry. Two other boys, besides Pùshkin, had a poetic gift, and thus the *entrain* was greatly embellished by the creative impulses. There was really as much literary self-educating in that youthful circle as there was of bacchanalian element. Pùshkin was in those days the best-read man in Russia. And his verse which he wrote every year for the anniversary assembly of the Lyceists are amongst his most sympathetic creations. . . . This strange school-time of his actually was the nursery of his genius. He soon became the heart and soul of the anacreontic little Olympus; he was the noblest and best of comrades, enthusiastic with every other young talent he noticed around; and he adored the old ode-writer D'erjàvin, the romantic Jukòvski, and the singer of Apollo, Bat'ushkov, whose modest pupil he considered himself to be for some time. But

nevertheless his genius developed entirely on its own lines; and the departures into the bacchanalian and even cynical elements which now and again diverted his Muse for the rest of his life can be well excused to him who had Southern blood in his veins * and received a "salon education"—only to turn these into the channel of national Russian poetry.

Here is a characteristic quotation from one of Pùshkin's drinking-songs of his Lyceum days:

"Goblet is brimful
With amber fine.
I, happy, thankful,
Drink—to the Wine!"

But this subject did not by far cover the horizon of his fourteen-to-sixteen-years-old brain. He wrote about 150 pieces of verse at that period, mostly of the Hellenic type, several of them addressed to his beloved poets. The lines about Jukòvski instantly take you into the atmosphere of this sincere romantic:

"His verses, sounding with bewitching sweetness,
Will live through many ever-jealous years.
When harking to them, youth will sigh for greatness,
Relief will come in grief and pain and fears,
And boisterous fun will pause in calm sedateness."

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* Pushkin's great-grandfather was a negro, received by Peter the Great as a boy, from Byzantium. Peter was fond of him and kept him in his personal service. The poet was not in the least shy of this ancestor on his mother's side; but the materials referring to the history of that negro are so contradicting that it is not worth while dwelling on them.

Pùshkin realized his vocation in his early teens—it was too obvious; but he remained modest, with all the joy it gave him:

> " I am a poet too. My new and modest road
> Is now bestrewn with flowers by goddesses of singing,
> And gods have poured into my breast
> The flames, elating visions bringing—"

exclaims he in a graceful short lyric, and one can feel the awe and reverence in his happiness at this instinctive revelation. In the happy *Ode to my Inkpot* the boy speaks of its bewitching power over him, lasting through many a night while his comrades are merry-making round a punch-bowl:

> " My treasures are in hiding
> Down in thy magic deep.
> • • • •
> My pen revels in finding
> In it the ends of lines.
> Exactness of expressions
> Through hallowed crystal shines."

This last thought shows how early Pùshkin's demand on his versification was formed: exactness of expression rests at the foundation of his poetry—just as fearless honesty rests at the bottom of his personality.

One of the typical lines of his art was writing epigrams, which he started with an impromptu epigram on himself at the age of ten: he wrote a French comedy *L'Escamoteur*, and duly acted it before his sister. It fell flat: the " audience " whistled. Angry for a moment, the boy quickly found relief in

his fair grasp of the situation, and addressed the "house" with:

"Dis moi, pourquoi L'Escamoteur
Est-il sifflé par le parterre?
Hélas!—c'est que le pauvre auteur
L'éscamota de Molière."

His epigrams of the Lyceum period were rather sharp; and those written later on could not be all of them published in Russia, both for political and "moral" reasons. But even his most cynical trifles strangely bear the golden dust of a genius.

Before he conquered the hearts of all his schoolfellows by his talent and genial comradeship, they somewhat disliked the atmosphere of French about him; in those days (1812-1817) the latter was not regarded as complimentary. Yet the youth fearlessly confessed his admiration for Napoleon's strength of character, for which he also adored Peter the Great; and in 1821 wrote a fine poem on Napoleon's death conveying serious individual thought:

"Praise to him! To the Russian nation
He pointed out its destiny;
From exile's gloom he sent the message
Of Earth's eternal Liberty.

. . . . . .

And o'er the urn where lies his dust
Hovers the nation's bitter hatred,
Shines Immortality august!"

At the public examination of the Lyceists in Russian literature in 1815, the old ode-writer D'erjàvin was present. The boys did not know how to contain the enthusiasm with which his presence was electrifying them, although the old man was quietly dozing while

their works were read. Pùshkin's turn came. He stepped forward and read his *Reminiscences of the Tsàrskoye Selò*. The *vieillard* woke up and did not take his gaze off the curly head and inspired young face. . . . When the last lines rang out, he wanted to rise and embrace the youth, but Pùshkin ran away into the depth of the garden, to live through the feeling of elation which was overwhelming him.

That same night he became known to the society of the capital as the coming poet. He was the topic of the conversation at the assembly in the house of the Minister of Education. The host was the only one who remarked that " it would be better, though, if the young talent followed the steps of some great prose-writer."

" Let him remain a poet," D'erjàvin remarked.

Soon after that Prince V'azemski, a poet, wrote about Pùshkin: " The verses of that young devil are growing remarkable. I would have given away all my estate for his expression ' the smoke of centuries ' !"

Now Jukòvski would read to the boy-poet the manuscripts of his own verse, and rely on his judgment. And, when the first pages of the manuscript of *Rusl̀an and L'udmìla* were read by Pùshkin in Jukòvski's home, the latter (then at the zenith of his fame) gave the boy his portrait with the inscription: " To the victorious pupil from his conquered teacher." Yet Pùshkin for ever remained extremely modest and critical with regard to his own poetry, while being most responsive to the beauties of every other talent. He was the first to find out the genius of Gògol'; and

when that writer made such wonderful use of the two subjects suggested by Pùshkin (*The Dead Souls* and *The Inspector-General*), Pùshkin only laughed and said delightedly: "That rascal robs me in such a bewitching way that it is impossible to be angry with him."

But we are anticipating.

After school, Pùshkin wanted to join the Military Service in the Hussars Regiment, as was the vogue with the cream of society in those days; but his father declined to provide the means which this necessitated, and at the age of eighteen the poet joined the Civil Service with the Foreign Office. This allowed him much leisure, and he plunged into the "high life," as well as into the *demi-monde*. At that time one could hardly draw a line between these two. The golden youth, as we call the younger generation of the aristocracy, revelled in all kinds of secret circles—religious, mystic, political, cynical, "masonic," erotic, etc. The most dubitable of these was one where the members enjoyed all sorts of headlong adventures, scandalous "amourettes," dangerous practical joking, and ultra-realistic theatricals, such as representing the fall of Adam and Eve, the ruin of Sodom and such other Biblical subjects. Pùshkin's physical build and constitution were exceptionally strong, and he kept them well in balance by his much-beloved ice-baths, swimming, riding, walking, and fencing; but the excesses * in the midst of "The Society of the Green Lamp" were too much even for his athletic nature,

* Разгулъ (see *The Russians and their Language*, p. 72).

and twice in the course of his nineteenth and twentieth years he nearly lost his health. It is astonishing that the orgies did not prevent him from working hard, and in 1820 the long fairy-tale *Ruslàn and L'udmìla* appeared.

It brought the house down—if one can apply this expression to a whole country! In the two capitals, provincial nooks, and large estates, by the military, the literary, the tradespeople and the scholars, everywhere, it was read and reread, copied, and learned by heart. The universal impression was that no poetry had ever been written in Russian before. The reading public, still resting on the elegies and Western romanticism, had suddenly offered to it a long fairy poem, largely founded on the elements of national fairy-tales: A wicked humped dwarf, a wizard with a magic beard dozens of fathoms long, carries away the only daughter of the Kiev Prince Vladìmir from her nuptial bed into his phantastic castle; the bridegroom Ruslàn and the three disappointed admirers (meaning to make up for their being formerly rejected) rush out on a chase. The adventures of the four young warriors, L'udmìla's seclusion in the wizard's castle, and the final victory attained by Ruslàn—who clings on to the beard of the dwarf so long that the wicked creature is bound to give up his flying "over the seas and forests," and brings him down—form the plot of the story.

The main fascination came with the young author's manner of handling the subject. It was as free as a morning breeze, as a sparkling spring shower; gay,

vigorous, whimsical, giving a carte blanche to every national idiom and to every "naughty" touch of thought that would bring out the many-coloured pattern of the story. In depth and power this youthful creation of Pùshkin's genius certainly yields to his later works, in which he kept developing and improving all his life; but in *naturalness* Pùshkin remained the same for ever. It was a feature of a genius who was *human, before everything and above everything*. That is why Russia, generally speaking, fell in love with him straight away. Russia loves the natural, only she did not realize this before Pùshkin struck her heart's chord. In fact, she did not realize the cause of her own delight even then: the word "realism" did not exist as yet, and none of the three parties—the wide public, the pedantic literary, or Pùshkin himself—was aware that the foundation-stone of Russian literature had been just laid by him. He had no notion of doing so.

Meanwhile the two literary schools existing in those days, the pseudo-classical and the romantic, were perfectly upset trying to find out with which of them *Ruslàn and L'udmìla* ought to be classified. The debating was raging fiercely, to which a regular chase on the part of the old pedantic literary was added. These certainly could not grasp nor digest the beauty of that speech which faced them for the first time in their lives from the pages of a . . . poem! The smile from the corner of the poet's eye, the bubbling-over human fun, the directness of the details—always to the point—was to them not "as bright as

God's day," as we say, but sacrilege. Indignation came from here and there (but not from B'el'ìnski, of course) with snapping ferocity: "What? Were *such* things supposed to be poetry nowadays as 'Ruslàn's tickling with his spear the nostrils of the giant's head'? And that head 'sneezing'? And Ruslàn 'standing beneath its nose'? And the wizard's menace to 'strangle Ruslàn with his beard'?" etc. Besides, some details concerning the hero's feelings were found quite unnecessary by the guardians of morality; while a good many judges, again, found the whole idea of applying the national element to poetry preposterous!*

* I cannot omit mentioning here what illustrates one of the drawbacks of the Russians—namely, their readiness to jump to conclusions. . . . *Ruslàn and L'udmìla* has inspired Glìnka (Pûshkin's contemporary) to make an opera of it. It is fine music, with which Pûshkin's verse and subject blend into one. Carried away by his part of one of the leading characters, an artist of the Imperial Russian Opera has written, a few years ago, a booklet, trying to prove that Pûshkin's cherished, unspoken (!) idea was to convey through that fairy-tale Russia's ancient longing for autocratic monarchism! and that the end of the tale glorifies the fulfilment of that national dream. Wouldn't Pûshkin laugh merrily if this "plan" of his had been explained to him—"revealed" more than a hundred years after his birth!

A corresponding "revelation" made about the other great man, L'èrmontov, I heard just lately: a Russian from the same province whence L'èrmontov came—where the local pronunciation commands a hard stress on the letter *o* wherever it comes in—declares that L'èrmontov has written his *Demon* . . . "purposely to point out the beauty of the letter *o*"! *i.e.*, the famous poem being a sort of an exercise on the letter *o*. I leave my reader to judge about this when he has read the article about L'èrmontov and his poem. What would the poet say to *that?* Probably, not, a word,

While all this unexpected literary whirlwind was still sweeping over Russia, Pùshkin dashed off in another direction, without in the least troubling to find out his destiny in literature (which many others would have found most important). Without a shade of self-centredness, he plunged heart and soul, in the same year (1820), into the movement of young reformers, many of whom were his best comrades. Their "Society of Welfare" presently developed into the Decembrists' circle, and Pùshkin was carried away by its potent revolutionary element. Pamphlets, epigrams, and poems of his pen which could never be openly printed, became widely known in manuscripts. The serious leaders of the movement, knowing Pùshkin's impulsive nature, did not think much of this self-abandonment of his (although they never forgave him his having given it up later on), but the wide public and the Government did. The *Ode to Liberty*, part of which the reader will find translated below, was the best of his creations of that year, the poem on the death of André Chénier following suit. Some of the stanzas of that ode are directly terroristic; but those offered here to the judgment of the English reader could be rightly called *Ode to Law* (they were printed for the first time in Russia in 1905).

Alexander I. said: "Pùshkin must be sent to Siberia. He is inundating Russia with abominable verses. All young people repeat them by heart." But the old historian Karamzìn and some other great people amongst his friends pleaded for Pùshkin, "who

was already the pride of Russian Literature," and he was only sent, on his service, to the provincial town Kishin'òv, in Bessarabia, with the promise of keeping quiet for a year. What really hurt Pùshkin to the depth of his heart was a vague rumour about corporal punishment having been inflicted on him by the secret police; this never has been proved as a fact, but the rumour might have been a special form of punishment in itself!

His banishment added to his popularity. But he fell dangerously ill on his way to the south, and might have perished if it had not been for General Rayèvski, who took him, with his own charming and refined family, to the Caucasus. This trip restored Pùshkin's athletic health and gave him inspiration for several small poems and *The Prisoner of the Caucasus*. This was the first work in which Pùshkin's talent found another channel of self-expression. A dramatic episode of real life, which most poets would be tempted to extend to 8,000 lines, is here put into about 800, partly descriptive ones, partly dialogue. Pùshkin never said a single word too much;* those he selected were always enough to give the clearest essence of any subject or plot. In *The Prisoner of the Caucasus* Pùshkin's reverence for woman reflected itself for the first time—to last throughout all his later works: A man in a Circassian village nestling in the Caucasian mountain-range brings home one

* This is the point which makes the translating of his poetry so difficult; where his words fill the whole of the lines, there remain in English gaps which one is bound to fill with what he might have said!

day his prey, a young Russian. This hero is the prototype of several others in Russian literature: he has left behind him his usual world, due to his disappointment with it, and hoping to find reconciliation with life in freedom of the wilderness; but, being captured by the Circassian, was put into irons and left to drag out his days in a cave behind the settlement of the tribe. The young beauty of his master's homestead falls in love with him—her first, girlish passion. He answers her caresses only out of pity, but tells her one day that his thoughts are far away with another woman, who never responded to his feelings. The girl is struck with grief, but *understands* him; she gives up her secret visits to him, which gives no more happiness to her, and one night, when the whole *aùl* (Caucasian village) is out on a raid, she comes with a saw and a dagger, saws through his irons, and takes him down to the river, beyond which he can find his way to freedom. They part with a kiss of great *human* love. The young man, deeply touched, looks round after he has swam across the stream, but the girl is nowhere to be seen on the steep bank, and "only a circle widens on the face of the water, in the gentle shine of the moon. . . ."

The wide public swallowed the poem greedily; the descriptions of the manners of life with the Circassians, then quite a new subject, were as clear-cut in it as was the romantic part of the plot.

On the way back to Bessarabia, Pùshkin visited Bahchisarày, the ancient capital of the Crimean Tartars, and its famous fountain, to which a dra-

matic legend was vaguely attached. Its subject struck his imagination, and another poem, in form akin to the preceding one, brought living human images out of the would-be-forgotten past:

The young Tartar Khan, Girèy, captures in his raid on Poland a young Christian Princess, Mary, and conceals her in his harem of Bahchisarày. He is so taken by her purity and saintly beauty that he remains in awe before her, for the first time in his life bereft of passionate daring; even the laws of the harem are broken for her sake; but, no need to say, Mary remains untouched by his adoration and only prays to her Saints. Another beauty, Zarèma, a Grùzian * girl who hitherto had had the young Girèy quite to herself and now lost him and all her happiness, finds her way in the night to the innocent usurper Mary, and implores her to make the man come back to her. But nothing can be altered, of course. So one night Mary is found dead, killed by Zarèma, while Zarèma, in her turn, is lowered down into the river's deep by the mute guardians. The Khan, in despair, leaves his harem to time and oblivion, and goes out to wage wars. . . . "But sometimes he suddenly stops with his sabre raised in the air, and his gaze fixed upon vacancy." He returns one day, only to build a fountain in memory of Mary, over which he erects a crescent crowned with a cross. . . .

A very romantic subject, no doubt. But Pùshkin's

* The Christian Caucasian tribe Грузи́ны (Grus ny), known for their classical beauty, and for the beauty of their land. They seem to be but little known in England as "Georgians," so I prefer keeping the original name of that country: Grùzia.

rendering of romance made his contemporaries hold their breath, so simple and real it was.

Before actually reaching his place of destination in Bessarabia, Pùshkin halted with the family of the Rayèvski in their estate in Little Russia, where he found quite a society of adherents of Byronic liberalism. He promptly learned English, and fell under Byron's spell; not so much with his political element as with the proud defiance of traditions. When Pùshkin reached at last Kishin'òv, in Bessarabia, he found there an atmosphere teeming with circumstances which gave but an additional carte blanche to the cult of individual liberty, but a far less refined one than the liberal mentality of the circle of the Rayèvski's family was.

Kishin'òv was a boiling-pot of all nationalities and tastes; the influx of the Greek and Moldavian elements (result of the Greek revolt, 1821-22) added a touch of Eastern pulsation to the strikingly irregular, passionate, noisy life of the town, and a waft of Western free-thinking blended with Asiatic aboriginality.

Pùshkin felt in it like fish in water! In spite of his official post, and to the horror of his fellow-*chinòvniki*, he would appear at every dubitable ramble, gamble, quarrel, razzle, overbrimming with the highest of spirits, mockery, readiness to fight and to quarrel, and an unaccountable fascination shining through all that. The authorities' hair stood on end. After three duels (one of them resulting from a quarrel at a ball as to what dance should be the next, valse or

mazùrka) even his nearest chief, who was the only one to regard Pùshkin with fatherly affection, had to speak to him severely. Presently he found it unavoidable to send him on an official message away from the town. Pùshkin—neither man nor poet—would not miss his chance: he fell in love with a wonderful beauty at a gipsies' camp and joined their wanderings for several weeks. Result—another excellent dramatic poem, *The Gipsies*. Obviously, whatever the man did, his poetic genius never stopped observing and re-creating life.

This time the hero, a man of society, comes to join the free life of a gipsy tribe because he has come to despise utterly the degenerating effect of so-called civilization. He had enough of the people of the cities:

> " Of love afraid, they cast off feeling
> And thought, and barter their free will;
> Before their idols blindly kneeling,
> They ask for chains and money still !"

This sounds sensible to the free and honest gipsy people; they quietly admit him into the heart of their carelessly happy, natural life. Alèko, as they call him, falls in love with the only child of a life-wise old man (*the* character of the poem), and is happy, just loving, lying about in the sun and taking round for show the tame bear. But Zemphìra, the girl, after bearing a child to Alèko, gets tired of him and falls in love with a born gipsy. Alèko feels this painfully and complains to her father. But the old man tells him how he, in his youth, lost his love in a similar way.

" And thou didst not kill her lover ?" asks the man of civilization; to which the old gipsy replies:

" For what ? . . . Man's youth enjoys birds' licence.
Who is there that can love restrain ?
In turn, joy brings to all suffisance.
What has been once comes ne'er again."

This truth does not satisfy the hero: he kills Zemphìra and her lover, after which the old gipsy asks him to leave their free, kind world, into which he has brought with him the wrathful egotism of civilization. They leave their camping-place and go away.

The touches of psychological realism in this poem are fine. One of them, just a detail, has later on caused a critic in Moscow to attack Pùshkin. What upset the " refined literary taste " were just the two lines with which ends that part of the poem where Alèko is watching his love and her lover, his two victims, being reverently, affectionately lowered into a grave side by side: when the last spadeful of earth is thrown over them, he, sitting on a stone, " slowly bends forward and falls on to the grass."

" But I could not write anything else," desperately exclaimed Pùshkin: " this is just what would have happened to the man !"

The length and breadth of Russia always understood him better than the critics did. He was too simple, too sincere and real, for those who tried (and still try) to find in him something concealed and complex.

But I have started on a difficult path: retelling the contents of each long poem of Pùshkin would take

nearly a volume in itself! Yet this going into the main features of his first creations has been unavoidable in order to point out what, I think, has never been sufficiently noted: it is just that deep reverence which he expresses for woman's feelings; he was the first to allow her complete freedom of choice, in feeling or in acting, upon whichever way she was bent.

Pùshkin's Mazeppa (in *Poltava*, a work which actually contains several poems, not one) is real. He is not idealized, as Byron's Mazeppa is; Pùshkin has shown the cunning old Hetman of the Ukràyna as he really was: "ready to undermine his foes whether honestly or dishonestly, never ready to forgive, boundlessly ambitious, having nothing sacred in his soul, loving nobody, ready to spill other people's blood like water, despising liberty and caring for no country"; *yet*, once that his foe's daughter, Marìa Kochubèy, has been fated to fall in love with him—with the stately, handsome old rascal—Pùshkin shows that love from *her* point of view:

> "For trivial talk what does she care,
> Or for reproach and lamentation—
> When to her knees, in admiration,
> Bends the proud head of old man fair!"

She leaves her lover and becomes insane when her father is executed, due to his intrigues; but . . . but what is there a woman will not defy in this world as long as she believes her beloved one to be the incarnation of spiritual and physical beauty? . . . And Pùshkin respects this weakness in woman. In

fact, he respects and admires everything in woman —except plainness!

Nothing can show less knowledge and grasp of Pùshkin than the following blame thrown at him: "He has been greatly over-rated. He was but a mere sentimentalist." I hasten to say that *no* Russian would have ever thought of throwing *this* reproach at Pùshkin! It was the criticism in an English daily I came across in the summer of 1916.

"Sentimentalist!" Is it because Pùshkin knew Woman and knew how to love her? Did the critic ever note the various aspects which love had for Pùshkin? . . . Has he read the deep little poem *I loved you* (p. 123)? Or these words of Evgèni On'ègin, by whose mouth Pùshkin says how he understands love:

"To see you every hour that flies,
To follow where your footsteps wander,
Your lips' faint smile, your turn of eyes—
On these my thirsting love to squander—
To listen to your voice, to grasp
By man's soul woman's consummation,
To pine for you, wither and gasp—
This is a life's supreme elation."

In spite of all the frank acknowledgments, isn't there a decidedly noble tone about that verse? Is that sentimentality? No.

Nor does the above quoted English criticism convey any understanding of the following lines, from various poems, very characteristic of Pùshkin's sense of humour about his own self:

"To fall in love is no more easy,
From sighs and groans—time to draw in!
To trust one's dreams—absurdly breezy!
To cheat the husbands—joyless sin!"

He wrote this *when twenty;* but later, on various occasions, he frankly wrote:

"Just what I was before, the same I am to-day:
Light-hearted, ever prone to fall in love again!"

Or isn't this end of a poem (to one of his "ideals") just a simple, honest, humorous smile?—

"And next autumn to your homestead
I shall come, and, as of yore,
Till November's winter season
Fall in love with you once more."

While in another case he takes the bewitchment of a woman almost for supernatural power over him, and, with a joking seriousness, expresses his fear like an ancient Christian before a wicked, tempting vision:

"I am bewitched; I burn with lust,
And, held by you in dire possession,
I but repeat in fear's obsession:
'Avaunt! Amen! Fall thou to dust!'"

And here is Pûshkin's *Tenth Commandment* . . .

"In Thy commandment, Lord, I read,
My neighbour's goods I must not covet;
But ask me not to rise above it
When tender hopes for licence plead!
I do not wish to harm my fellow;
I never grudge him house or folk;
Nor will his cattle e'er provoke
My envy—though in hordes they bellow;
His wife or ox I never seek,
Of asses I am unobservant;
But if his youthfullest maid-servant
Is pretty—Lord! There I am weak."

I really cannot believe that anyone knowing these lines could possibly call him a "sentimentalist"! Or,

what poet on earth except Pùshkin has ever dared to say what has come to him (during a drive in bright moonlight) as the most natural comparison to a plump, uninteresting though "fresh" young country lady:

"Her ruddy face is round and plain
Like this plain moon beaming again
Up in the silly plains of heaven!"

With respect to the moon, Pùshkin did not, of course, despise it altogether, but it never made him write a poem; it had no fascination over him. Perhaps, to some this would suggest that he . . . was not a poet? But, then, he saw beauty in, and made poetry of, so many things in our life which a non-poetic eye would never have noticed!

Pùshkin was not given to brooding over any disappointments. He never dwells on a melancholy mood, even if it does come over him. His elegies are short, and mostly end with a note of hope; one of the very few really sad ones was written in 1821; it begins with the youthful "revelation":

"I have outlived all my desires;
I no more love my dreams of yore."

The same as with the attitude towards love, this alley of melancholy soon finds a way out on to the open road; there is broadness about it:

"But oh, my comrades, death I have not sought:
I want to live, for suffering and thought!

. . . . . .

And it may be that on my sad sunsetting
Rays of his parting smile shall love be jetting."

A still broader outlook, almost a forecast, is reflected in the last lines of his poem *The Country*, in which self-centredness finds no room at all; he wrote it under the impressions of the village life:

"Friends! Shall I ever see no more oppressed the nation,
And serfdom fall'n at sway of Tsar's compelling hand?
Shall the enlightened dawn of glorious liberation
At the long last arise over my Motherland?"

There was too much "wholeness" (цѣльность), as we say, in Pûshkin's nature to suffer from inner duality; he did not know any; when he altered his views, he would do so whole-heartedly. Only once in his life, on his twenty-eighth birthday, the great painful problems of human existence seem to have visited and overwhelmed him, and he wrote this little poem:

"Casual present, gift so aimless,
Life, why art thou given to me?
As by secret judgment nameless,
Why is death-doom passed on thee?

"Who, with hostile power inspired,
Called me out of nothingness,
My poor heart with passions fired,
Doubt upon my mind did press?

"Aimless is my whole existence,
Vague my mind, emotions thin.
With monotonous persistence
Life out-tires me with its din."

However gloomy it sounds, the unusual mood was soon gone—under the influence of a very primitive factor: the Metropolitan Philaret, who used to make verse as a hobby, answered Pûshkin's queries by paraphrasing his poem in a most orthodox, dogmatic

way. But this satisfied the resourceful singer of reality: in his turn, he answered the Metropolitan by another poem, so beautifully grateful and so poetically expressed that it was certainly too good for the occasion!

Thus, a few short elegies and this incidental little lyric of doubt exhaust Pùshkin's melancholy meditations. He was a singer of *this* world, reflecting it with an almost photographic exactness. Yet it was "reality turned into a pearl of creation," as Gògol' put it: this is the best characteristic of Pùshkin's poetry that has ever been pronounced. None of the volumes of research work written about it since have ever approached the exactness of Gògol's definition.

Let us have another look at the events of Pùshkin's life before we say more about his realism.

The poet's "Byronic behaviour" (as the officials defined it) in Bessarabia gave them too much trouble, and he was sent to Odessa, to join the staff of the new Governor of the large district. The life of a big town always had a charm over Pùshkin; but his position in Odessa came as a disappointment to him: the staff of Count Vorontzòv, the Governor, was meant to be, and was, an unimpeachably correct, brilliant body of firm officialdom. There were no traces of Bessarabian freedom about it. Pùshkin, already a beloved poet, nevertheless found himself watched by many relentless eyes, and felt ill at ease with this lack of sympathy in his circle. Trying his best was no good: *he* would never make an immovable, faultless, and heartless figure of a *chinòvnik*.

But the conquering power of talent goes farther in Russia than anywhere else, I think. At least, even Count Vorontzòv himself, desiring to give the poet a chance, sent him on an "easy and interesting reconnaissance work" into the depth of the country—namely, "to investigate the causes and the results of the locust plague." Pùshkin went, and returned with the following official (!) report:

"The locust was flitting and flitting;
And sitting
And sitting sat, ravage committing,
At last the place quitting."

Yet nothing thunderous happened. The fascination of Pùshkin's name was so great that the incident resulted only in Count Vorontzòv's naïvely writing to St. Petersburg asking to have "that imitation of a none-too-respectable Lord Byron" taken away from him "in order to let him improve his undeniable talent by studying classics"; further, the Count asked the authorities not to consider his letter as a plea for punishment.

But before this letter reached the capital Pùshkin got into a fix. He wrote to a friend:

"I am reading the Bible. The Holy Ghost sometimes soothes me, but I prefer Goethe and Shakespeare. There is an Englishman here, a clever atheist, who overturns the theory of immortality *en passant*. I am having lessons from him."

This letter was intercepted, which had a double effect: it instantly became known, spread privately in hundreds of manuscripts, and was devoured by the

hungry minds of the reading public; and it swiftly led to Pùshkin's exemption from the Civil Service, and a banishment to the estate of his parents, Mihàylovskoye, in the north-western province of Pskov.

One can imagine the indignation of his easy-going parents. The old dandy accepted his son, "ce monstre, ce fils dénaturé," with the ferocity of the most zealous of spies: he actually made the young man's existence unbearable, and Pùshkin soon pleaded to be sent to a fortress as a kindness and relief. Thanks to Jukòvski's intervention and influence, the old couple left their nest of "aristocratic refinement," and the poet remained alone with his beloved old nurse. This was in 1824.

Now came those many months of quiet (over two years) when his genius developed to its full height. He found his crowning power in the realities *of the Russian land. Tête-à-tête* with his beloved "Muse" and friend, the old nurse, he again went, with her help, through that wonderland of his country: the fairyland without Western fairies, but with wondrous things of its own; these are not hiding with us in a special nook like Alice's Wonderland, but "dwell and happen" all over Russia. The reader will find the gist of them in the *Prologue;* also a glance into a long tale through the pages from the *Tsar' Saltan.* Pùshkin wrote six of those long folk-fairy-tales, not to count *Ruslàn and L'udmìla.* Most of them went through the criticism of his lovable inspirer. Indeed, she was a fair judge of those subjects she had known from her childhood. And this is the only point in

B'el'ìnski's works in which I disagree with him: B'el'ìnski could not see any national talent in those fairy-tales. His passion for enlightening Westernism barred from his sight the beauties of our folk-lore retold by Pùshkin. But he saw his nationalism in everything else that came, henceforth, from Pùshkin's pen: B'el'ìnski says that all Russia is reflected in Pùshkin's works of this and of the following period: the Russia of the boyars, of the monks, the crowds, the society.

It would be impossible to give here the contents even of those best creations: there are so many "best" ones. The long historical poem, *Poltàva;* the novel in verse, *Evgèni On'ègin;* the historical drama in blank verse, *Borìs Godunòv;* the story in verse, *Bronze Horseman* (a description of the great inundation in St. Petersburg in 1823), depicting Pùshkin's love for Peter the Great and for our "young" capital, etc.;* while dozens of shorter poems came in between the largest pearls.

With regard to the evolutions of Pùshkin's mind under outside influences, the two years of his seclusion stripped him of his Byronism and made him a passionate follower of Shakespeare. Here are his words from a letter of that time: "Shakespeare! What a man! I am overwhelmed. What a nonentity Byron is with his travesty of tragedy, as compared to Shakespeare!"

* But a reproach with which Pùshkin has addressed the "Bronze Horseman" (Peter's monument on the quay) must have been banished by the censor, because the story appears inconsequent at its dramatic turning-point.

This desirable influence can be easily traced in *Borìs Godunòv;* and I can hardly see any drawback in it, as some critics do.

When Pùshkin was, later on, told by one of his friends that many people reproached him for altering the subjects of his self-abandonment, he simply remarked:

"I think it is only fools that never do."

Shakespeare undoubtedly helped Pùshkin to develop his power of realism, but the spirit of our poet found entirely Russian channels for expressing it. Who except a Russian to the core could write the *Autumn* (translated below)? That unpretentious, yet perfect, smoothly running prose, scanned and rhymed in alternatively-built stanzas, its simplicity and sincerity, its unexpected yet natural end, as it really came to the poet as he was sitting there at his fire-place after the impressions of the day—all that is *Pùshkin*, and no one else in the world.

To everyone who knows the intonations of the Russian speech, even *The Devils* (translated below) reflect reality: this is the best picture of a snow-storm in the plains of Russia ever written, with the exception of L. Tolstòy's. The driver, "seeing plainly" the devils who cause the blizzard, is not in the least surprised: he only grumbles. This attitude is catching, and the poet "sees" them too. Altogether, Pùshkin's element of the magic itself has a decidedly realistic vein running through it. His wonderland is a matter of course: it is Russia.

It was in the seclusion of his exile that Pùshkin

wrote the main part of the first Russian novel: *Evgèni On'ègin*. There is no wonder that, as its chapters appeared in the press, one by one, they swept the Russians off their feet with delight, as *Ruslàn and L'udmìla* did in its day. There is nothing out of the way in the plot of *Evgèni On'ègin;* but society suddenly saw in it the Russian country unfolding the greatness of its simple beauty, a life-size portrait of itself with its superficial interests; and the dignified, lovable type of Russian woman, then unobtrusively lurking beneath the coarse layer of Russia's past, and not yet audible through the buzz and shallow prattle of society life. As a poetic creation, *Evgèni On'ègin* is the pet-child of Pûshkin's mind. He has reflected his own education, tastes, and manners in the hero, Evgèni; it is the first work of a conscious psychological analysis in Russian literature. The then typical man of society, who had brains, would be naturally bored with life in his early years, because he did not know what real life was; he "hastened to live and hurried to feel" on too narrow a scale. The first blow Evgèni gets is the realization of the fact that the thoughtful girl whose spontaneous, child-like love he callously neglected when she was seventeen, rejects his passion (unexpected by himself) when she, married, is shining, dignified, in the heights of society life. Then only, being honestly told by her that she still loves him but will remain true to her husband, he flies from the capital tortured by his first deep heart pain; we see him stopping short in his aimless wanderings

and exclaiming the untranslatable Russian—" Toskà, toskà ! . . ."*

At the beginning of the story he kills in a duel a romantic poet enthusiast of whom he is quite fond, but to whose fiancée (the girl as round and plain as the full moon) he pays special attention out of cussedness. His preaching to the other girl, in answer to her love, is not a bit attractive to one's romantic feelings; but Evgèni is not meant to be a walking virtue. He is just a sample of a real man, clever but egotistic, and paying for his egotism. But in the end he remains more attractive to the reader than otherwise—just like Pùshkin himself, and for the same reason too: The " society-ness " (свѣтскость) of Evgèni is genuine, as Pùshkin's society-ness is. Evgèni On'ègin never poses; he is honest in caprice, irony, or ennui.

Here is how Pùshkin himself characterizes this work in dedicating it to a friend:

> " Accept these motley chapters' run,
> Pages half mirth, half sadness blending,
> Idealistic, unpretending;
> The casual fruit of leisure, fun,
> Insomnia, light inspirations
> In youthful and in ripened years,
> My mind's dispassioned observations,
> My heart's grave notes on human cares."

In form the novel reminds one of *Childe Harold*, but in form only. Every description and every bit of irony and humour which shine through the numerous sidelights, breathe of Russia. In this work Pùsh-

* See *The Russians and their Language*, p. 91.

kin has blended into one entity Russia herself, her love for the real and simple, and his own art.

I think my reader might enjoy a few samples of that "Russia's breath, the smell of Russia," in the aspect of the natural, as well as he might enjoy it in the aspect of the unnatural; the bits of the novel and the bits of the fairy-tale poems will, I think, give an idea of the two, respectively.

Nothing is lacking in the two lines which characterize an old uncle-bachelor in his country estate of those days (from whom Evgèni is expecting his inheritance): "For forty years he nagged with his housekeeper, looked out of the window and squashed flies."* Again, when the girl heroine asks her old nurse, "Tell me, how didst thou love in thy youth?" the nice old creature answers: "But, darling, my mother-in-law would have swept me off the face of the earth for such nonsense!" The lines which follow in the novel are the sap of the old Russian land itself.

And here are those describing the scene at the large country home after the birthday dancing-party is over, and many guests are left to stay overnight: "All is quiet. In the drawing-room the formidable Pust'akòv is snoring side by side with his half" (the ironical Russian expression for spouse). So-and-so and So-and-so (several names follow) are stretched along the chairs pushed together in the dining-room. Only On'ègin is gone home with the poet."

* No need to remark, I hope, that this, and any other quotations, are perfect verse in the original, in spite of their prosaic subject.

And here is a silhouette of a minor character in the story: "Once upon a time the head of a secret team of gamblers, now he was a kind and simple father of a bachelor's numerous brood, living the life of a true philosopher: planting cabbages, breeding ducks and geese, and teaching his youngster the ABC."

In Pùshkin's verse all this runs in that best kind of typical Russian verse which allows no transposition of words, no poetic licences; it is irreproachable prose, versified, as the realistic subjects are magically turned into poetry. All characters use the genuine everyday speech, and the author's own thoughts are told in the same way; for instance, "One can be a serious man and yet think of the beauty of one's nails." Pùshkin applies colloquial and idiomatic expressions of the people, with that same swing of power with which he creates words of his own (by the way, he was the first to use "Petrograd," the Russian form of "Petersburg"); he calls the critics (in his *Joke*) "fat-bellied," makes a young son of a *pop** a very meagre figure by giving a twist to the word (попёнокъ), calls an impudent prig "over-starched," and so forth. But some of the best examples of his knack of "turning reality into a pearl of creation" are his descriptions of town streets. . . . You feel almost sunk in mud while he talks about the old unpaved Odessa, and you can't help rejoicing when you suddenly "hear" new sounds as if rising to you from the verse: it is the

* Priest (see *The Russians and their Language*, p. 207).

cartloads of stone that have been emptied, and the ring of the workmen's hammers announcing that the paving is begun! A very popular stanza, also in *Evgèni On'ègin*, is the one describing the streets of Moscow. The young heroine is brought by her mother from their estate to the capital to make her first appearance in society. The old-fashioned hooded chaise on runners (возóкъ) is dashing along the streets up and down those hard humps of snow which get now higher, now lower, in the course of the winter, but keep their curves. We have no brakes for ordinary driving in Russia: the steeper downhill, the faster and jollier. Therefore, reading this stanza, a Russian almost feels the familiar bumps and that abrupt swaying of one's body now ahead, now backwards, which in a long run makes one's back ache a bit. The stanza, filled merely with the names of things which "make" Moscow in reality, runs like this:

"O'er the snow-humps the sleigh is dashing;
Alongside in the streets are flashing
Shops, convents, palaces, mean shacks,
Peasantry, country-wives, cozàks,
Gardens of kitchen-stuff and flowers,
Street-boys, lamps, chemists, fashion-stores,
Churches, stone lions at house-doors,
Sentries, sleighs, balconies, old towers,
Merchants, Tartars that sell old clo',
And on the crosses many a crow."*

* The gilt cupolas of the churches in Russia usually attract flocks of crows who swarm round them and perch on the highest crosses. As Moscow is supposed to have "forty forties" (сóрокъ сорокóвъ) of churches—so runs the somewhat exaggerated expression of the pious—it is no wonder that the rowdy liveliness of the crows' gatherings

Yet my reader must not think for a moment that Pùshkin wrote everything in an idiomatic language, with prearranged tendency. He only cancelled the taboo which hitherto divided the words of life from the words of poetry; when his subject was romantic, he would naturally express it in a phrasing as elate and tender-ringing as Schiller's or Keats'. Such, for instance, are the meditations of the young poet brought up on Western romanticism (whom Evgèni On'ègin kills in the duel) on the eve of his death. This was one of the rays of Pùshkin's talent: inspired by the Koran, he wrote nine *Imitations of Koran*, which stand amongst his highest creations. His чýткость* (the capacity of opening one's heart and nerve-fibres to everyone and everything) made him assimilate that poetic élan which, through the Koran, has touched the lives of countless millions. In these *Imitations* Pùshkin strikes the reader with the brevity, the powerful swing from subject to subject, the blend of sensuality with religious enthusiasm and even the element of "nonsense," which all of them permeate that foundation-stone of the Eastern Law. Equally brilliant are his *Imitations of Dante*: it is the *Divine Comedy* over again with all its forceful images and its naïve grandeur of speech. Again, when his pen describes, as if by the mouth of a young Roman, *The Journeying of Cæsar*, the prose comes in a form

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against the gold of the cupolas and the blue of the skies forms a characteristic finishing touch which could not escape Pùshkin's eye.

* See *The Russians and their Language*, p. 20.

which is not an atom below the best of the Latin classics.

But Pùshkin's ordinary prose (I mean his stories of Russian life and the unfinished historical works) is far below his poetry; being very nearly his only words so far known in English translation, they must be the cause of the vague idea in this country that Pùshkin is "over-estimated."

Another feature of Pùshkin's art was that he never tried to invent any new forms for his verse. "Why not follow the accepted forms of beauty?" was his opinion. This feature corresponded with his never venturing to fly up into the misty heights: he never meant to open the gates of the Unknown for silly humanity, and he never troubled to win its imagination by developing new technic of versification. The old iambic, introduced by the first Russian scientist and ode-writer Lomonòsov a century before, was good enough for Pùshkin. The only innovation of form introduced by him was the verse of Shakespearian type (reminding mostly of *Henry VIII.*) in which *Borìs Godunòv* was written. Pùshkin never played about with his technic in a coy, graceful, artful, acute, or uncanny manner which is one of the features of modern Russian poets.* He did not scorn even the dear old gods! But when his Muse invited them, nothing could replace them more adequately. Everything in his verse is always to the point. As he never invented a pose for himself, so he never thought of any mannerism for his art. His metaphors are few

* See *Russian Poets and Poems*, Volume II.

and appropriate; one of them comes in his three lines describing the appearance of Peter the Great on the battlefield of Poltàva:

"... His eyes
Are shining; features awe-inspiring;
His movements swift. Handsome, untiring,
He is like heaven's thunderstorm."*

Wholesome, breezy, clear-cut, genuine, free, honest —such is Pùshkin's verse. To me it always rings and looks like a big handful of shining brass balls flung on to a polished floor: the metallic clang, preciseness, and exuberant freedom of their "go" could not be stopped or altered by anything. ... Pardon: *one* thing can do it—namely, putting Pùshkin's verse into another language. No translator, no poet in the whole world could convey the ringing freedom of his *Russian* lines; and what is offered to the reader below is only their faint vision; the most passionate devotion to the original, helped by the best-applied technic of English versification, would be unable to convey the life-force of the originals.

Nor can another language convey the Old Russian and Old Slavonic twists and turns which Pùshkin freely uses when they do give the best curves to his haut-relief; for instance, his Old Russian man will address his Tsar' as "Thou Hope Tsar'"—the patriarchal caressive form of respect; or what will you do with expressions like these: "the sea-ocean";

* Unfortunately, the difference in the length of the Russian and the English words has made me add a stop-gap, namely the word "untiring." But it has its *raison d'être* because, elsewhere, Pùshkin gives several stanzas to depicting Peter's untiring, "eternal" activity.

or " the hedgehog hedge-hogging "; or " *on* Moscow " (meaning *in* Moscow) ? All such-like forms of speech belong to the land of Russia, whence they cannot be transplanted ! Bright colour-dabs which " smell of Russia " are at our disposal even within the shortest of conjunctions: just like every other poet or prose-writer, Pùshkin turns the usual *s*, *k*, *v*, (for *with*, *to*, *in*) into *so*, *ko*, and *vo*, whenever the tone of the speech is meant to be very Russian. What is the translator to do with them ? The corresponding English conjunctions have no " very English " forms, have they ? Also, like every other Russian writer, Pùshkin builds new words on old roots. But this subject would again lead us into the sphere already discussed in the other book (*The Russians and their Language*); and it is time now to approach the last period of Pùshkin's life.

While he was in the seclusion of his village, the Decembrists' revolt took place (on the day of Nicholas I.'s accession—14th of December, 1824). Every day brought with it news of the peril of some of Pùshkin's old comrades. His separation from the outer world had been hard to bear as it was, and these events doubled the pain. Pùshkin was not with his friends in their crucial hour; he had kept his promise to the Government, and yet he might be sent at any moment to " where Makàr drives his calves to graze," as runs our grimly humorous saying. This upset Pùshkin very much, and he burnt a number of his old manuscripts, letters, verses, and reminiscences. After that, obedient to the advice of his friends, he took

the initiative into his hands and approached the new Government with a petition, signing a pledge that he would never join any secret societies if freedom were to be granted to him. This led to the desired effect; at least, a "field-yeger" appeared one morning at the porch of Pùshkin's nook, gave him just time enough to put on his greatcoat and to take his money, re-entered with him the sledge in which he came, and off they dashed back again to St. Petersburg. The poet, besplashed, cramped, and crumpled after the cantering across two hundred odd miles of the country, stood beneath the eyes of the young Emperor who had sent for him in his study.

The greeting was simple and kind, but no beating round the bush:

"Zdràstvuy,* Pùshkin. I hope thou art pleased with thy return. Wouldst thou take part in the 14th of December if thou wert here?"

"By all means, Sovereign. All my friends were in it. My absence alone has saved me."

"Well, thou hast played the fool sufficiently long. I hope thou wilt be sensible in the future and we shall not quarrel. Send me all thy manuscripts; I shall be thy censor myself."

One can imagine with what welcome Pùshkin met in the two capitals after that. The months that followed were the happiest in his life. He was the cherished guest everywhere; there was no limit to public enthusiasm. Pùshkin joined the main current of social life and of literary life which were speedily

* A term of greeting at any time of day or night.

developing at that time; he seemed to be the medium for every noble passion and emotion, which made him rise to his highest. He electrified society.

But in his happiness he overrated the extent of his rehabilitation and freedom. Gradually he realized that he was not meant even to read aloud a single line of his writings without having submitted them to " his own " censor. What is more, this enthroned censor appeared to be not the only one. The omnipotent Count Bekkendorf *would* have all Pùshkin's manuscripts first. When the poet, unaware of this, sent a number of his new works to the leading quarterly review, this was sufficient for Bekkendorf to become his wrathful foe. Two of Pùshkin's new works were never returned to him and perished. Probably influenced by Bekkendorf, Nicholas I. did not pass the historical drama *Borìs Godunòv* either; he said: " It would be more suitable to have it rewritten by the author in prose instead of verse, and have it turned into an historical novel like those of Sir Walter Scott." Poor Pùshkin locked the manuscript up in a drawer and reported that he was sorry he could not rewrite it. Obviously, in spite of the fact that Borìs Godunòv was a parvenu and attained the throne due to his own cleverness and will, it was not considered fit in those days in Russia to approach the psychology of the crowned.* This drama was not

* By the way, the personality of Borìs will appear a little clearer to my reader from the soliloquies translated in this book if he reads the one from Alexèy Tolstòy's drama (p. 252) first: there Borìs speaks to his sister Tsaritsa a year *before* he is elected Tsar'; while Pùshkin character-

published till 1831, when it appeared much polished and toned down, as it is known and acted until now.

Perhaps Pùshkin's greatest relief in those last years was his founding and editing a literary monthly, the *Contemporary*, which was to play a great part in Russia's self-development through the decades that followed.

Bekkendorf continued to hurt Pùshkin's feelings at every occasion; it soon became known that a constant secret surveillance of the police was established over the poet's behaviour. The nets enveloping him were made of fine silk. . . . We find him again an official in the Civil Service, holding a high post, with the permission of studying the archives, in order to write the history of Peter the Great; true, these studies did not fail to inspire Pùshkin (*The Bronze Horseman* and the best historical prose stories were written at that time), but his position was far from being desirable. Presently the nets were drawn in tighter by the rank of a "Kamer-yunker" bestowed upon him: this implied meaningless compulsory functions at the Court, such as being present at all the ceremonies and at the Palace church service, which ill fitted the poet of over thirty, because all the other "Kamer-yunkers" were beardless youths. Twenty thousand roubles were given to Pùshkin by the Government for the publication of his works, and

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izes him in the sixth year of his reign. The general supposition is that Boris organized the murdering of the boy, Tsarevich Dmitri, who would have inherited the throne of his father (the weak-willed Feòdor).

the membership of the Academy offered. But retirement from service, for which he asked, was never granted to him; and we see him in 1829 dashing away to the Caucasus, without obtaining leave. There he joins the Russian ranks and exposes himself to the enemy's bullets, but returns safely, only to increase the wrath of Bekkendorf. Pùshkin's marriage to a beauty of society whom he sincerely loved increased the expenses of his life in the higher circles. All this, combined, cast its shadows even on Pùshkin's resourceful nature, and one can but admire his working capacity, which never failed him to the end. He steadily continued to train his talent, in perfect reverence for the laws of his art. At the same time, he could not restrain his wit, and a series of brilliant epigrams which seemed to stick to their victims like labels increased the numbers of his admirers *and* of his foes. When he became particularly friendly with Jukòvski and wrote, under his influence, the narrowly patriotic, officially sounding poem *To the Slanderers of Russia*, he was as sincere at the moment as ever. But now the assortment of his enemies became complete; there was no camp which would not count within its ranks some opponents to Pùshkin: now he had enemies amongst the reactionaries, the revolutionaries, the inaugurators of Westernism, and the Pan-Slavists.

But the blow came, and they all blended in the universal stream of Russia's grief. . . .

Pùshkin's wife was of dazzling beauty, and the dandies of society formed a circle around her at every

assembly and at the Court balls. One of them, Baron Dantes, a young officer of the Guards, of French and Dutch extraction, became too pressing with his attention. Pùshkin received a series of anonymous letters. Later research into the matter showed that Count Bekkendorf did not remain outside this scheme of the intrigue, and a certain section of society joined in the base pursuit. . . . Pùshkin trusted his wife entirely. She wanted him to leave the capital and retire with her to the country in spite of their lack of means, but Pùshkin was not inclined for compromise. He challenged Baron Dantes, although the latter promptly married the sister of Pùshkin's wife. The duel took place on a morning, just outside St. Petersburg. Count Bekkendorf knew of it, and . . . "by mistake" . . . sent his messenger to prevent it—in a wrong direction!

Pùshkin was fatally wounded. In the course of the two days of his agony Russia seemed to think of him only. The street where he lived remained thronged with crowds breathlessly waiting for tidings. The address given to all messengers and drivers was brief: "To Pùshkin! . . ."

Nicholas I. immediately sent a personal letter to the poet, sending his "forgiveness, his advice to die as a Christian, and his promise that he would take care of his wife and children," and kept inquiring many a time, day and night. In the midst of terrible suffering, Pùshkin expressed deep gratitude for the Tsar's attention and accepted the blessings of the Church. He died in the presence of Jukòvski and of

other close friends, saying good-bye to his books that surrounded him in his room, and expressing anxiety for his wife, " whom the world will hound to death." But Nicholas fulfilled his promise: Pùshkin's family remained in his care in every way. Yet the removing of the poet's coffin to the church was done in the middle of the night: accumulation of crowds was never trusted in Russia, and " disorders " were feared. The passionate lines L'èrmontov wrote in his grief and indignation—blaming " those hangmen standing round the Throne "—spread like wild-fire in manuscripts, and were devoured by the public.

But Pùshkin died without condemning that outer world which would not blend with his wonderful straightforwardness, with that simplicity, that clearness of his soul, which was greatness in itself. One would have expected from the Russians to have understood him, like one man, but many of them failed. It is only recently that they have come to appreciate and to love him to the extent which he has always deserved.

Pùshkin loved life. The anticipation of death which he felt approaching him steadily during the last two days seemed to torment him more than physical agony. " Toskà ! Toskà ! . . ." repeated he. It was the pain of the forced separation from this life: he found the sources of life-force and the joy of art on the level of our everyday existence.

Jukòvski embodied in his poetry the romanticism of youth with all its vague longings and graceful illusions; he remained a " virgin poet " till the end

of his long days. But Pùshkin came, and in his twentieth year, with a free, natural, boisterous gesture, stripped Reality from her daintily-coloured veil—not to show her possible hideousness, but to enjoy the beauty of her forms. And beneath his hands, Nakedness rose like a piece of magic sculpture, warm and breathing of life.

FROM THE "ODE TO LIBERTY"

⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ —
⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑

Fly, hide thyself from out my sight,
  Queen Venus, whom Cythera ringeth!
Come, menace to ignoble might,
  Muse that of Freedom proudly singeth!
Come, tear the roses from my brow,
  Break the sweet lyre of passions tender:
  For I would sing—Freedom's defender—
Vice on the throne to vanquish now.

. . . . . .

Tremble, ye tyrants of the earth!
  Fate's random minions, heed and cower!
  Awake, ye bondsmen of their power!
Rise up, I say, and show your worth!
Looking around I ever face
  Whips upon whips and fetters groaning,
Laws' peril in a world's disgrace,
  And helpless slaves for ever moaning;
Arrayed on every hand I mark
  Dense superstition, fatal craving
  For fame, and genius for enslaving,
And unjust power thunder-dark.
Where a sure stronghold doth surround
  The Law and holy Freedom reigning—
There only o'er the rulers crowned
  Drones not the people's dire complaining.
It is the law that doth instal
  You rulers in your kingly stations:
  You stand aloof above the nations,
But Law stands high above you all.

And woe, and woe to every race
  Where Law shall lurk neglectful, dozing,
Where King or People shall outface
  Her equity, o'er justice glozing.

. . . . . .

Hark to the Truth, ye Tsars and Kings!
  Neither rewards, nor prosecutions,
Nor prisons' gloom, nor altars' wings
  Can shield you, safe from revolutions!
Come first, abase with bended knees
  Your heads 'neath Law's protective entry—
  And at your thrones shall stand as sentry
The nations' liberty and peace!

THE BEGINNING OF THE POEM "THE BRONZE HORSEMAN"

⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ —
⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ —
⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑

He stood upon the lonely shore,
In thought deep as the waves' deep roar,
And gazed into the distance. Grandly
The Neva rolled her width before;
A solitary boat skimmed swiftly.
Just here and there against the green
And swampy moss there could be seen
Black dots of Finnish dingy hovels.
The sunshine hid by misty screen
In the dark forest held no revels;
The trees moaned, murmuring.
  He thought:
"Hence Sweden's might shall we o'ershadow,
Here build a town—thorn in the side
To vex our haughty neighbour's pride.

Nature herself wills that our window
Should here be cut through Europe's wall;
Firm on the Baltic shores, we shall
See foreign ships each other follow
With fluttering flags to the new port,
And, joyful, feast our guests at Court."[1]

A hundred years—a city new,
The northern lands' fair pride and wonder,
Rose from the swamps where forests grew;
A stately, gorgeous beauty! Yonder,
Where hitherto a lonely Finn,
Nature's sad stepson, cast his fish-net
Into the virgin waves, whose din
Alone broke silence round his hamlet
Upon the bleak, low shore—there throng
Gay crowds the busy streets along;
And, shouldering each other, masses[2]
Of towers and palaces now stand;
Long file of ships passes, re-passes
Through harbours, by the wealth-strewn strand.
Herself in granite Neva clad,
Hung themselves bridges o'er her waters,
Decked themselves out her island daughters
With many a garden green and glad.
Bows now her head old Moscow, drooping
Before the younger capital,
As to a new Tsaritsa stooping
A dowager Queen in purple pall.

I love thee, Peter's own creation;
I love thy stiff and stately sight,
Broad Neva's powerful fluxation,
Her great embankments' granite might,
Inwrought designs of iron gateways,
Thy still, transparent, thoughtful nights
When soft and silvery moonless glimmer
Enters my room—and, without lights,

I read and write past midnight chiming,
While, clear cut, sleep the giant buildings
Along the empty streets, and higher
Soars bright, the Admiralty spire.
And, the deep dark of night not letting
Touch the gold skies, the dawn of day
To take the twilight's place is fretting,
Just yielding night one half-hour's sway.
I love thy cruel winter bright,
On Neva's ice the sleigh's fleet races,
The glow of frost on maidens' faces,
Motionless space of ice-nipped height;
The ball-rooms' talk, their buzz and dazzle,
And, at the hour when young men razzle,[3]
The foamy punch-bowl hissing blue.
I love the warlike clash and clamour
Of spring manœuvres in Mars Square,
The footmen and the horsemen there
In rhythmical and even glamour;
Over each stately rippling line
The captured colours torn and tattered,
And of those helmets bright, shot-shattered
In former frays, the brazen shine.
I love the cannons' smoke and thunder
The martial capital will see
When in the northern Palace yonder
Tsaritsa bears the heir-to-be;
Or when a war in triumph past
Rus' celebrates with joyous voices,
Or when broad Neva breaks at last
Her ice and whirls it seaward fast,
And, scenting the spring days, rejoices.[4]

AUTUMN

⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑
⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ —

Октовнь has stepped in. The copse is slowly shaking
The last of foliage down from branches crisp and bare.
The autumn blast breathes cold; the road is dry and freezing,
The brook is gurgling yet behind the mill as e'er,
But ice has gripped the pond. My neighbour now is hastening
His hunters' team afield, to haunts of fox and hare;
The corn's first growth is crushed by sport's blind depredation;
Dogs' barking fills the dozing woods with life's pulsation.

II.

My favourite season, this! I do not like the spring;
Smells, dirt—they tire and clog; dreary I find the thawing;
The blood ferments; the heart dejection still doth sting.
Give me—give me the depth of winter, stark and gnawing:
Her sheets of moonlit snow I love to see her fling
When horses canter light, the sleigh full fleetly drawing,
And a soft hand beneath the sables' warm attire
Presses your own and tells of maiden's thrill and fire.

III.

What joy to clasp the boots with metal sharp and shining
And glide for miles along the river's even glass,
Or in gay holidays oneself to whirl resigning.
Yet, as the time goes on, six months of buried grass
Under the snow suffice to set a brown bear whining!
You never would enjoy the whole of life to pass
In going drives with girls—even as fair as Tasso's!
Or pickling yourself down behind snug double windows.

IV.

Thou summer bright,[5] I should be fond of thee as well;
But what a plague—the heat, the dust, flies, gnats and chafers!
Thou kill'st our intellect and castest a dread spell
Upon our souls; like fields, with drought one thirsts and suffers;
The only thought is how to stand this scorching hell!
One misses all the fun which gaffer winter offers,
And grieves that the *bliny* and wines of butter-week[6]
Are gone, ices alone left of her joys to speak!

V.

The cold late autumn days, I know, are reprobated;
But I am fond of them, my reader! Much of true
Loveliness mute and meek, as in a child misrated
By its own family, in them I call to view.
Autumn's the only time that makes my heart elated
Of all our seasons here, to be quite frank with you.
A modest lover I: her dreamy looks of sadness
My wistful fancy finds a source of tender gladness.

VI.

How shall I make this clear? I to the autumn bow,
For she appeals to me as, in decline prostrated,
Maiden appeals sometimes. Death sentence on her brow,
Poor darling! she must droop. Not knowing what is fated,
Her lips ne'er murmur, nought but happiness avow!
She does not see at all the chasm that has waited
For her so long. She laughs! Her cheeks flush hectic red.
She is alive to-day—the morn may see her dead.

VII.

Fine doleful autumn mood! A subtle fascination
Caressive to my sight! A beautiful good-bye. . . .
I love the gorgeous fall of Nature's radiation,
The scarlet and the gold clothing the forests high,
Wind wafting through the groves with wakeful susurration,
And heavy waves of mist that spread and hide the sky;
The sun-rays faint and few, first frosts that nibble slightly,
And of the winter grey cold hints that menace nightly.

VIII.

With autumn's blast I find my strength again revive.
The Russian cold suits well my Russian constitution.
The love of olden ways returns, keenly alive;
The hunger and the sleep revolve in consecution.
My heart is quite at ease, gladness and joy arrive,
And I feel young again—burning with resolution,
Desires and life itself. Thus is my body prone.
(Deign kindly to excuse my most prosaic tone!)

IX.

My horse is at the porch. Through vastness[7] cool and open,
Shaking his mane, he flies 'cross roads and fields around,
And clicks beneath his shoe the layer of first ice broken,
As his bright hoof-beats ring upon the frozen ground.[8]
But daylight fades, and soon the smouldering flames awaken
On the neglected hearth, and leap and glow; the sound
Of crackling wood blends with my solitary reading,
While long thoughts lead me far with their soft steps unspeeding.

X.

And I forget this world. The quiet of the room
And fancy weave around sweet visions of contentment;
Then poetry awakes, and with its brilliant bloom
My heart with rapture thrills; with lyrical excitement
Flutters my breathless soul, as in the mind's dark womb
It feels its way to birth in self-revealing movement.
And then I see approach the host of guests sublime,
Old friends, creations of my dreams in bygone time.

XI.

The thoughts begin to stir, courageous and distended;
Light rhymes rush from afar to meet them on their way;
My fingers clasp the pen, by ink and book attended:
One moment—and they flow, free in their fresh array.
So dozes motionless a ship, her sails suspended.
But see! The sailors run and scatter every way—
Up, down, each to his post. The sails are swelling stately,
The giant launches on and cleaves the waves sedately.

XII.

It goes . . . Where shall we go? . . .

PROLOGUE TO THE FAIRY-TALE "RUSLÀN AND L'UDMÌLA"

⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ } *varying*
⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — } *in order.*

Near a sea-cove an oak is growing;
Around that oak a golden chain:
Along that chain Sir Cat-the-knowing
Doth ever walk and walk again.
Goes to the right—a song he chaunteth,
Goes to the left—a tale he tells.

'Tis wonderland: there wood fiend[9] haunteth,
And mermaid 'mid the branches dwells.[10]
There are strange paths, the spoor betraying
Of beasts that to no eye appear;
A hut on chicken's legs, displaying
No windows and no doors, is here.
The dale and forest teem with vision.
At early dawn, in neat precision,
The waves upon the beach unfold,
And thirty warriors young and splendid
File from the lucid deep, attended
By their sea-guardian grave and old.[11]
Lightly a princeling doth imprison
A thunderstormy[12] tyrant there;
There, over seas and forests risen,
Seen by the people high in air,
A wizard doth a hero bear.[13]
Languishes there a royal beauty
To whom dun wolf gives faithful duty;
Trit-trot, trit-trot the mortar-car
Self-moved speeds on Baba-Yagà.[14]
There pines the Miser, gold o'ertelling;
There Russia breathes . . . Of Rus' 'tis smelling!
There I have been; there I drank mead,
Saw the green oak near sea-cove growing,
And sat beneath; Sir Cat-the-knowing
Did with his wondrous tales proceed.
O'er one of these I like to ponder;
I'll tell the world what I heard yonder.

DEVILS

— ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑
— ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ —

Clouds are rushing, clouds are curling.
From behind them,[15] pale moonlight
Flickering falls on snowstorm whirling.
Dim the sky, and dim the night.
On and on the sleigh still bears me.
Little bell goes ding-ding-ding. . . .
There is something scares me, scares me,
'Mid the plains' mysterious ring.

"Driver, get along!"—"I can't, sir;
Horses find the going bad.
Blizzard blinds one's eyes. No chance, sir.
Road is utterly snow-clad.
Strike me dead, I seek it vainly!
What's to do? Road can't be found.
'Tis a devil's doing, plainly,
Turning us clean round and round.

There, now: look—you see him playing,
Blowing, spitting straight at me.
Now into the ditch he's pushing
That poor frenzied horse, you see.
There like milestone, which there isn't,
'Fore my eyes he stuck up stark;
There just like a spark he glistened,
Then he vanished in the dark."

Clouds are rushing, clouds are curling,
From behind them pale moonlight
Flickering falls on snowstorm whirling.
Dim the sky, and dim the night.
We are tired to circle farther.
Bell stops jingling, with a jump.
Horses also stop. "What's yonder? . . ."
"Who could say, sir? Wolf, or stump."

Blizzard's wailing, blizzard's baying,
Horses scent it, snort their fear.
In the distance he is playing;
In the dark his eyes burn clear. . . .
Horses now launch onward, lathered.
Little bell goes ding-ding-ding. . . .
There the fiends, in swarms foregathered,
In the misty whiteness cling:

Fiends unnumbered, ghastly, skirling
In the play of scant moonlight—
Fiends of every form are whirling
Like November leaves in flight!
Crowds of them! Where are they driven?
Why this wail in plaintive pitch?
Are they burying Burlow Beanie?[16]
Marrying devil to a witch? . . .

Clouds are rushing, clouds are curling;
From behind them, pale moonlight
Flickering falls on snowstorm whirling.
Dim the sky, and dim the night.
Onward rush the devils, teeming
In the boundless, wild inane,
By their howls and plaintive screaming
Rending nigh my heart in twain. . . .

THE BEGINNING OF THE FAIRY-TALE "TSAR' SALTAN"

— ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ —
— ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ —
— ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑
— ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑

Three young maidens on an eve
At a window sat to weave.[17]
Says the eldest, as befits a
Clever cook: "Were I Tsaritsa,[18]

A great feast I would prepare
For the whole wide world to share.
Says the second, as befits a
Weaving wench: " Were I Tsaritsa,
I would weave for old and young
Lots of linen fine and strong."
Says the youngest, as befits a
Loving maid: " Were I Tsaritsa,
I would to my husband Tsar [19]
Bear a son, bright as a star." [20]
Hardly was her fancy uttered
When the door-latch gently fluttered,
And the Tsar' of that fair land
Was upon them, close at hand.
He had heard the sound of talking,
Paused to listen on his walking,
And, delighted, overheard
The ambitions of the third.
" Hail to thee, my stately sweeting!
Hail to thee!" he cried in greeting:
" Be Tsaritsa, and anon
Bear to me a gallant son. [21]
You, her sisters, sweet and clever,
Rise and come with us for ever:
One of you can be our cook,
One can to our linen look."

So the party to his place
Went along, their fate to face.
Tsar' was young: with no adjourning
Marriage lights were brightly burning
On that very night, and straight
He partook of feast in state; [22]
After which the guests remember
To convey them to their chamber,
Lead them to their ivory bed,
Leaving there the newly wed.

In the kitchen cook-girl's crying,
At her loom the weaver's sighing—
Both of them with envy hiss,
Thinking of the luck they miss.
And their young Tsaritsa-sister
(With her longing to assist her)
Did conceive that very night
A Tsarèvich starry-bright.

At that time a war was raging.
Tsar' Saltàn in tones engaging
Bade her, as he mounted steed,
"As thou lov'st me, take good heed."
While he was away and fighting,
All his foes with valour frighting,
Came the child-birth's happy morn:
Boy, a yard in length, was born.[23]
O'er her eaglet like an eagle,
The Tsaritsa, young and regal,
Sends a horseman fast and far
With the news to father-Tsar'.
But the cook-girl and the weaver
And the matchmaker deceiver[24]
Want to ruin her repute:
Catch the herald on his route,
Send another with a letter,
Telling of a shocking matter:
"In the night Tsaritsa bore
Neither boy nor girl; what's more—
Neither frog, nor mouse, nor crayfish,
But a beasty strange and dwarfish."

Tsar', on hearing this wild thing,
News of which the man did bring,
Straight began to rave and bellow,
Meaning first to hang the fellow;
But, his anger growing less,
Sent him back with word of grace:

"Tsar's return must be awaited
When his pleasure will be stated."
So the herald, danger o'er,
Swift that message homeward bore.
But the cook-girl and the weaver
And the matchmaker deceiver
Intercept him at the door,
Treat him to good wine galore,
Search his scrip and take the writing,
One in place of it inditing
Straightway; so the tipsy man
Carried an ukàz which ran:
"Now the Tsar' commands his nobles—
Take Tsaritsa and her offspring,
And in secret, no time lost,
Let them in the sea be tossed."
Nobles, seeing no reprieving,
Over the Tsarèvich grieving,
Entered poor Tsaritsa's room
To declare the fatal doom
On her boy and her inflicted
By the Tsar's harsh will convicted.
So the dread ukàz they read,
And that very hour, with speed,
Was a tarry cask provided,
She and boy were put inside it,
And into the green-blue sea
It was rolled: 'twas Tsar's decree!

In the blue sky stars are flashing,
In the blue sea waves are splashing.
O'er the sky a cloud-sheet creeps,
O'er the waves the barrel leaps.
Like a widow lost and failing
Cries Tsaritsa, fluttering, wailing,
While the child through day and night
Grows each hour in size and might.

One day gone. Tsaritsa sobbing . . .
And the boy, with life-force throbbing,
Speeds the waters: " Hail, you waves !
You who visit rocks and caves,
You go gadding where you want to,
Shape the flints when rolling on to
Sloping beaches of the land,
Ships on you can glide or stand !
Do not drive our souls to dangers—
Prithee, beach us, ocean-rangers !"
With a plunge the waves obeyed,
Rolled the barrel up and laid
On a sloping beach most gently,
Then retreated reverently.
Now the mother and her boy
Felt the solid ground with joy.
But how will they be released—
Still in tarry barrel squeezed ?
Help them, Lord ! . . . The boy stood up,
Pressed his head against the top,
Strained his shoulders just a little—
" Shall we try to break some tittle
Of a window ?" shouted he,
Burst the top—and they were free !

" I LOVED YOU "

⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑
⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ —

I LOVED you, and it may be that the feeling
Is not yet gone entirely from my soul;
But let it never cause you pain: revealing
My inner world would only bring you dole.
I loved you so unspokenly, so dearly,
By hopelessness and jealousy depressed,
So tenderly I loved you, so sincerely,
As may you by another's love be blessed.

BORÌS GODUNÒV'S SOLILOQUY FROM THE DRAMA "BORÌS GODUNÒV"

⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ } *varying*
⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — } *in order.*

I HAVE attained the highest power.
For six years I have reigned in peace unbroken,
Yet happiness my soul has never known.
In youth, we fall in love and long for sweetness
Of passion; but no sooner our desire
Is pleasured by a moment's acquisition,
Than deadened is our joy and we grow wearied.
Vainly the wizards prophecy for me
Long days of life and of untroubled power:
No power, nor life itself, will gladden me.
My heart is overcast by heaven's tempest.
No bliss for me. I meant to give my folk
Welfare and peace, success and radiant glory;
I hoped to win their love by generous ways,
But soon I had to quit the vain endeavour.
While rulers live they're hateful to the masses;
To win the people's love one has to die.
'Tis madness we should let our hearts be torn
By the fierce roaring of their discontentment.
When God sent famine to our spacious land,
And men and children died in dread and torture—
I opened stores of corn, gold in abundance
I gave them, and I helped to find them labour:
Yet like a mob possessed they turned and cursed me.
Fire spread and burnt their dwellings mean and old—
At once I built them new ones, goodly homesteads:
And they accused—me, of the conflagration!
So judge the masses; go and find their love!
I hoped to gain relief in home and children,
To see my daughter married happily;

But, like a storm, death comes and fells the bridegroom. . . .
Upon this, senseless rumours rise—and I,
I am declared the cause of this misfortune,
My daughter's widowhood—I, in my grief! . . .
Whoever dies, I am the secret slayer:
I have brought Feòdor's end on him so early,
I have with poison killed his wife, my sister
Tsaritsa, then a humble nun: I—I! . . .
Ah! now I see it: there is nought at all
Can comfort us amid this worldly turmoil.
Nought, nought! . . . Our conscience might perhaps console us—
Clear, unimpeachable, o'er harsh, black slander
And over every wickedness she triumphs. . . .
But if there is a single darkling spot,
A single spot to sully snow-white conscience—
Then all is lost. As with contagious plague
The heart will swell, the soul will burn with poison,
The blood will throb, reproachful, in the ears—
And sickness strangles—one grows feeble, giddy—
And little boys bloodstained before one's eyes. . . .
Where can one fly for help? Nowhere! . . . Oh, horror!
He's lost indeed whose conscience is not clear.

A. Kubizek

ALEXÈY VASÌLYEVICH KOL'TZÒV

FOLK-POET

1808—1842

Kol'tzòv is one of the four poets who stand out most prominently as *essentially Russian*, not only in the spirit of their works, but also in the structure of their speech; of these four, Pùshkin was a man of society; Al'exèy Tolstòy, a genuine aristocrat; N'ekràsov, a true representative of our *intelligentzia*; and Kol'tzòv, the son of a plain cattle-dealer—an almost illiterate herdsman, yet a genius as a folk-poet.

Kol'tzòv's poetry is a nugget of gold with the grains of mother-earth blended on its surface and softening its shine; his vocation found its channel of expression in the style of folk-song—certainly not verses written purposely to go with music, but those poems the kind of which existed with the Russian folk-lore since the times of yore. When going through the unconscious process of creation amongst the aboriginal, poetically inclined people, those poems were naturally accompanied by singing, by tunes created in the same matter-of-course way as the words. Nevertheless, I can hardly agree with Mr. Walishewski that Kol'tzòv's songs (which are in-

distinguishable in their *genre* from the folk's creations, yet embellished by the power of individual talent) "should not be declaimed; they must be sung to the music of some balalaika." Forsooth, the Russian manner of good reading or good reciting contains all those peculiarly quaint intonations which make recitation music in itself! That is just why our folk-lore blends its epic with song: numbers of long "tellings," skazàniya (сказанія), are *told* in a certain harmonious drawl, a stately and graceful half-recitative which forms a certain branch of national Russian art.* But Kol'tzòv's verses do not fall under this category either. They certainly have inspired musicians to compose music for them, but they can be spoken as ordinary poetry, and the genuine Russian scheme of intonations will make them ring with their own beauty. I have never heard of a balalaika, with its tinkling, chuckling sounds, being applied to Kol'tzòv's short-lined but always graceful poetry. Perhaps Mr. Walishewski happened to come across some artist who did it without impairing the field-atmosphere of Kol'tzòv's songs. But, then, what is there a true artist cannot do?

Kol'tzòv spent his 'teens wandering from village to village over the face of the steppes on his father's

* From time to time an unsophisticated artist of that kind is discovered by some "intellectual" in the depths of the country and brought to the capitals; and then society flocks to hear him, or her, with unaffected artistic force "telling" (by heart, of course) these long folk's creations, half-poetry and half-music.

business in buying, selling, and mounting guard over his large herds and flocks. These were just the surroundings to fill a responsive heart and ear with folk-song. And when, with his poetical gift thus prepared to spring up from the soil, the sixteen-years-old Kol'tzòv came across a book of (Dmìtriev's) poems and fables, he, first, began to sing them in exaltation, thinking that they were songs, and next started " putting together " songs of his own. All his education began and ended at the local preparatory school, which he visited for one year and four months. But fate brought to him a true ray of light in the person of a nice and intelligent man, Kashkìn, who then was the first and only (idealistic) bookseller in the second-rate town of Vorònej where the Kol'tzòvs dwelt. He noticed the young boy who used to gaze at the books in his doorway, and he began supplying him free with the best Russian literature of that time (Pùshkin, Jukòvski, Dèl'vig). This proved to be the final factor; the boy knew how to read good things—although he could never learn to spell properly! And, guided by the sound advice and criticism of Kashkìn, he let his heart speak out what it wanted to say—in the form of " songs." It should be noted forthwith that he remained of a sincerely modest opinion of all his creations till his end, never stopped being painfully aware of his entire lack of education, and never accepted a single copper for his verses when it came to their appearing in the best periodicals.

The second beneficial push came from the part of

a young scholar of the local seminària (semi-ecclesiastic secondary school), one Serebr'ànski, who possessed a highly developed literary taste. This second friendship also remained one of the few treasures of Kol'tzòv's life-time.

But there is no room for anyone's compassion for the "poetic soul suffering from the prosaic, rustic profession"—at any rate not in his youth. To begin with, this very profession contained that element of poetry which called forth his genius, and all his verses are alive with the oneness with Nature's beauty which came directly through his wanderings in the steppes. Kol'tzòv refers to these professional wanderings in two of his best works, without a shade of false shame. Secondly, Kol'tzòv was not born a vague dreamer, with a languid, melancholic, or superior angelic intellect dissatisfied with ordinary mortals from his childhood! He was a deeply passionate, most resourceful nature, gifted not only with poetic talent, but endowed with vital spiritual power, including even a most active practical sense. He was a very efficient cattle-dealer indeed, and his father, who appointed the boy his head-assistant in his early teens, greatly appreciated his capacities; when the wall between his boy and the outer, intelligent world was broken, the old Kol'tzòv still remained for some time reconciled with his heir's poetical occupations, due to the literary acquaintances to which they led: because those big literary men of the capitals took interest even in the private business troubles of the cattle-dealer, and helped him in several

instances, using their influence on the authorities of the officialdom (so did Jukòvski and Prince V'àsemski). When the time came which made Kol'tzòv fully realize the gap between his two worlds, and suffer with it acutely, he naturally lost his ardour in cattle-dealing, and then his father burst forth with his condemnation of " silly nonsense," and not only lost all interest in his son, but created a perfect hell for him at home, where he gradually perished at the age of thirty-three, of consumption, spiritually alone amidst the bustle in the bosom of his family. Even his sister, who used to be his true friend in their youth, turned a cold shoulder on him, of which one is ashamed to think. Russian women are not always " wonderful " !

Kol'tzòv came in touch with the literary world (1831) thanks to a chance, which brought him, with a stock of cattle, to the distillery of one Stankèvich, a rich man whose son was then already a friendly Mæcenas, whole-hearted, humane, and intellectual, of the Moscow University students, and the inspiring host of their literary and philosophic coteries. The young votary of Art immediately detected its light kindling in the young cattle-dealer, and soon after that acquaintance some verses of Kol'tzòv first appeared in the Press. That same year Kol'tzòv came to Moscow, still as a cattle-dealer, and had the first glimpse of what life in the circle of literary people could be. . . .

In 1835 Stankèvich published a volume of Kol'tzòv's songs and verses. The money for this publica-

tion was collected on the spot at one of his samovàr-and-literature at-homes. The booklet attracted much attention: not only as the embodiment of a herdsman's inspiration, but because it was something really new, vividly yet unaffectedly painting the joy and grief and power of a peasant's soul, the throbbing passions of village lads and lassies and their hardships, yet without the least admixture of "artistic" sentimentality. A few minor poets tried their pen in imitating the Russian folk-song before Kol'tzòv, but their efforts were conscious, intellectual, and therefore feeble; whereas here was something genuine, great in the simplicity and conciseness of its essentially Russian folk-speech, lifted to its highest by the instinct of a true talent.

The next year (1836) brought to Kol'tzòv all the treasures of intelligent friendship: with Pùshkin (whom he adored), with Jukòvski, Prince V'àsemski, Prince Odoyèvski, and, crowning all, with the critic B'el'ìnski. Kol'tzòv's devotion, adoration, and affection for that great man of the time was a source not only of inspiration, but also of happiness. In his turn B'el'ìnski wrote, referring to a long stay of Kol'tzòv's at his home in St. Petersburg: "I am revived by Kol'tzòv's presence. What a rich, what a noble nature! I feel as if I were in company with several excellent people."

Meanwhile this very wave of modern intelligence and of the awakening nationalistic realism—a wave to which Kol'tzòv himself was unconsciously adding a current of freshness—was hurting him painfully:

he could not blend with it altogether, and he felt himself out of it through his lack of education. Yet there was no time to fill this gap. While he considered B'el'ìnski's invitation to stay and live with him at St. Petersburg, he was called back by his father's business difficulties, went home to Vorònej, and was gradually choked to death by the atmosphere which now showed him all its swampy gloom and narrowness.

Kol'tzòv's poetry, as well as his correspondence with many of his enlightened friends (all of which is now published), depict a nature which is great in its spiritual resourcefulness, its lack of false shame, and its capacity for passionate devotion. He is not merely "a singer of complaint and mortal sadness" fed on his own and the peasantry's misfortunes, as some imagine him to be. One of Kol'tzòv's services to Russian literature, not fully realized till of late, consists just in this aspect of his poetry: that he does reflect the light of peasants' life where light exists—for instance, their both poetic and practical love for toil on the land, their love joys, and that instinctive delight in the feeling of self-abandonment and blending with wilderness which does not seem to exist outside Russia. . . . (In any case, the words belonging to this latter conception are untranslatable !*)

Kol'tzòv is not one-sided, because his talent was simple and spontaneous, never leading to a conscious

* I can only give some of these in original: развуди́сь плечо́, лихо́й, удала́я башка́, въ по́лѣ ви́хремъ вѣ́ялся, зави́хриться, разступи́тесь лѣса́ темныя, разойди́тесь рѣ́ки быстрыя, усе́рдце расходи́лося, пожить нараспашку, etc.

aim of a citizen (as did Nekràsov's talent later on). Kol'tzòv's vocation was one of an all-embracing folk's poet, and not one of a fighter for folk's civic liberties.

Therefore the spirit of pluck, which cannot be possibly denied to the Russian peasantry, and Kol'tzòv's own spiritual power naturally coincided; and many of his verses breathe of determination to go through life steadily without losing heart. The worst luck for a translator is that this very Russian spirit of reckless courage and determination is naturally expressed by essentially Russian shades of words and phrases, and the English versions can convey their general sense only. But, on the other hand, once my reader believes that such expressions do exist, he is bound to realize that the Spirit which has created them exists as well. Here, then, are a few feeble echoes of that resourceful spirit, put in prose where the sense will not fall into rhythm:

"A brave fellow (молоде́ць уда́лый) will just whistle away like a nightingale, and will find his luck without the help of light or road!"

"Even before I loved thee I was *the* boy in every village. And now that thou lovest me, I don't mind facing any town!"

"'Tis never late to meet our luck.
Our life may brighten up at sunset:
At noon the sun is scorching hot,
But towards e'en 'tis gently warming."

"Facing grief, stand upright,
Fighting hard for thy soul.
Facing storm, do not yield
Single step of thy goal. . . .

At a festival gay
Look as cheerful as day,
And in going to fight
Sing like nightingale bright !"

The verses addressed *To a Comrade*, translated below, reflect the poet's acute observation of the relative attitude of the crowd and the individual: Kol'tzòv gives the sound advice never to complain, but to trust one's own spirit and one's own " broad shoulders."

One of the songs, translated on p. 142, is typically Russian in its unsophisticated frankness: A young fellow, brimming over with energy, is burning to go out and to spend it in any reckless, dashing way. First he can think only of becoming a " gallant highwayman," " bold adventurer," " reckless head," whom everybody will be bound to admire. But then he suddenly thinks of what the village priest is " rubbing into them," and most unexpectedly, yet whole-heartedly, turns his ideal of a highwayman's career into that of a soldier.

I anticipate the question: " A man of Kol'tzòv's nature surely had a great power of loving in him ?"

Indeed he had. . . .

The first love, one which left a trace of bitter sadness on the whole of Kol'tzòv's life, was a young, beautiful serf whom his parents had bought as a domestic servant from some serf-owners. The passion was mutual, sweeping all before it. Kol'tzòv declared his intention to marry the girl. Therefore he

was sent on a long business tour, and in his absence she was sold to some land-proprietors living very, very far away. When Kol'tzòv returned and discovered what had been done, he fell ill with brain fever, and very nearly died. On recovering, he flew to the steppes and searched for her in all the towns and villages he could think of, but all in vain. The story says that the new owners were brutal, and tormented the unfortunate beauty to death. Kol'tzòv never saw her again. *The Parting*, translated below, refers to that event; the poem was written some thirteen years after, but its simplicity and sincerity show how vivid the feeling remained in the poet's heart. So does the song *Where are you, my days?* it indicates that the poet took entirely upon himself the blame for the tragedy which befell his first love.

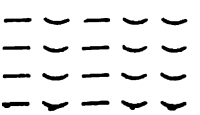
The second passion was in the last years of his life, when he was already in close connection with the literary circle. It was equally overwhelming and equally fatal. Its object was a heartless courtesan. One can judge of the depth of his undeserved devotion by the verse *To* —— (p. 147). It has an autobiographic value only. His generous wish expressed in it *was* fulfilled, and, as one can believe it, only precipitated his end. The woman never loved him. Thus the last year of Kol'tzòv's life was a veritable tragedy.

The political problems of the land had not approached Kol'tzòv's mind; in any case, not his muse; but the intellectual influence coming from his literary

friends affected his writings in a threefold way. First he began writing what he called "thoughts." These contain the simple philosophizing of a man whose mind has just come to face the problems of cosmic existence and of our place in the universe. They are verging on naïveness, and, from the point of view of poetry, are worth next to nothing. They are more or less long, but unrhymed, as are very nearly all his songs. Secondly, in the last years of his life, Kol'tzòv added to those "thoughts" and to the songs various poems of a general nature; in these he began developing rhyme and fine poetic power. His original terseness of speech became most palpable. There is hardly a poem written after 1837 where you would not find the gist of a whole situation, a whole drama, or a whole scenery, conveyed in a few short lines. This capacity of his may be traced in *The Night*, translated below—a whole tragedy in a nutshell.

The third way in which the touch of enlightenment influenced Kol'tzòv was, that several of his very best songs were written at that period. This shows that his individual talent was developing in its own way, beneficially influenced, but unmitigated in its original colouring.

With regard to rhythm, Kol'tzòv's favourite way was the national one—*i.e.*, winding up each line with a dactyl:



Or

— ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ ⏑
— ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ ⏑
— ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ ⏑
— ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ ⏑

or still longer lines of the same nature. Usually he did not rhyme his dactyls at all, and even when he did he would mostly rhyme only the final syllable of the dactylic words (or groups of words), as though an English poet were to rhyme deliberately "motherless" with "callousness," or "lightning-lit" with "down with it," using them as dactyls. The Russian language allows this quite easily, as well as weaving in here and there a beat on the last syllable amongst dactyl rhymes, thus turning a line of — ⏑ — ⏑ ⏑ into one of — ⏑ — ⏑ —, whether this last accentuated syllable is rhymed or not. A very clear example of this style is *The Night;* but, if I had rhymed it in its original manner, it would give the English reader the impression of a very weak Russian versification, which is not the case. Therefore, although the trisyllabic rhyming in the translation of *The Night* given below (wherever Kol'tzòv does introduce any rhymes at all) takes away for me the lilt of the Russian poem, it had to be done in English all the same, because it will probably convey its original character to an English reader much better than a faithful rendering of the twists of its Russian versification: this faithfulness would not do the little poem justice. (By the way, doesn't its terseness and style in general remind you of

Browning?) The demands of the Russian and the English versification clash here again,* as these twists do not impede the poetic and musical swing of the Russian verse at all.

When Kol'tzòv selects a metre with the beat on the last syllable, it usually is:

⏑ ⏑ — *Or* ⏑ — ⏑ —
⏑ ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ —
⏑ ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ —
⏑ ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ —

Using the second, he will occasionally slip in a line sounding ⏑ — ⏑ ⏑, which is a counterpoise to the character of *The Night*. As I say, both manners are entirely within the laws of Russian versification, and do not minimize the beauty of the poetic folk-speech in the least.

When Kol'tzòv does make a technical mistake it is usually a transplacement of the stress in some word, which also occurs in the folk-lore; whereas with regard to the correctness of the *number of syllables* in each line he is almost unimpeachable: I could find only two extra syllables in the whole of his book. In spite of this rhythmical stateliness, there is distinctly "a wild-flower freshness" about his poetry. Unfortunately, the made-up English dactyls, in the place of his single words filling in the whole or the main part of the lines, kill the directness of the originals. On the whole, Kol'tzòv's genuine beauty is unconveyable in translation, and my attempts at it are the weakest in this volume.

* See the Introduction.

THE HARVEST

— ⏑ — ⏑ ⏑
— ⏑ — ⏑ ⏑

Flaming ruddily,
Dawn came glorious;
Spread fog clingingly
O'er earth's countenance.
Day came flaring up
With sun's radiance,
Sent fog high aloft
O'er the mountain-top.
Made a cloud of it,
Black and ponderous,
Which all-frowningly
Gave forth gloominess.
Deep in thought she was,
Frowning, looking as
Though she thought of her
Far-off mother-land.
Stormy winds on their
Courses furious,
High up catching her,
Sent her travelling.
And she clad herself
Close with lightning and
Gloom and thunder and
Rainbow vividness.

Flew she battle-like,
Spreading everywhere,
And her blow she struck,
And her tears she shed—
Large and heavy tears,
Showering heavily
On earth's bosom, so
Broadly spread to her.
Purest water then
Earth had plenty of;
From the zenith the
Dear red sun looked then.
Nor could villagers
Take their eyes at all
Off their gardens, their
Fields' bright emerald.

. . . . .

Grain-filled heavily,
Rye stands statelily,
Bending dreamily
Down t'wards mother-earth.
Smiling kindly, like
God-sent guest, to the
Golden day on her
Right and left, is she.
Golden wave of the
Breeze runs sunnily,
Rippling, shining o'er
All the face of her.
And whole families
Of the villagers
Come, put sickle in
To the roots of her.
Stacks stand goldenly
Nightlong nevermore
Stops the song of the
Creaking waggon-loads.

Stocks and sheaves in the
Sheds sit handsomely,
Like to princes their
Proud heads holding up.
Harvest finished, the
Dear red sun at last
Towards cool days of the
Autumn glideth now.
But as warmly as
Lights of villagers
Glow the prayers they
Bless the Virgin with.

A SONG

— ⏑ — ⏑ ⏑
— ⏑ — ⏑ ⏑

Not for me is it,
Bold adventurer,[1]
On the stove[2] through the
Wintry days to lie!
Is it anywise
Like myself to go
Ploughing fields or with
Flails the oats to thrash?
Fields befriend me not,
Scythe ne'er mothers me,
No good folks around
Ever neighbour me.
Bold adventurer
Craves a forest thick,
Night's obscurity,
Steed that's true to him!

I shall groom him well,
Sharpen dagger bright,
Tighten belt, and fly
With the winds away.
I'll be free as free
In those forests deep,
Called by everyone
Bold adventurer.[3]
All I come across
On the highway road
Caps will doff at once
With respect to me.
Rob the rich will I,
Kill the gentlemen,
Fool mujik as well
For his coppers kill.
But 'tis sin, perhaps,
Folk to harry so—
Good and pious folk
Who were kind to me?
Pop in church doth oft
Rub it in that our
Soul pays penalty
Of blood-guiltiness.
I shall rather, then,
Be a warrior,
And for Christian folk
Lay my head alow!

TO A COMRADE

⏑ ⏑ — ⏑ ⏑ —
⏑ ⏑ — ⏑ ⏑ —

Do not air bitter grief
With the stranger, my friend;
Trust the might of thy soul,
With thy shoulder's strength fend.
Wake with dawn to thy work,
Rise in cheerfulness bright,
And the whole of the day
Work alone with thy might.
What? Bad luck? No success?
Stay at home all the same
With thy sorrow, and meet
Trouble new without blame.
Strive and struggle until
Chance will find golden luck
Which will stay with thee long,
And repay for thy pluck.
And the same queer old spell
Now will alter its song:
It's new tune will attract
People's hearts before long.
The same men who would scorn
From their pride to unbend
Now will all do their best
To be counted thy friend.
Don't get angry with them,
But in peace and in rest
Make a feast of thy life—
Heart demandeth its guest!

THE PARTING

— ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ ⏑
— ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ ⏑

At the dawn of dim gold youthfulness
I did love my fair with heartfulness.
In her eyes Heav'n's light lurked shiningly,
On her face love's fire gleamed burningly.

What was morn of May compared to her?
Or the forest's still green motherhood,
Grassy steppe's brocaded silkiness,
Evening down, or night so fairy-like?

When she's far you're nice, the rest of you,
As one's heart's distress[4] one shares with you.
When she's here you may be there or not!
Frost a spring, dark night a day she makes!

I shall ne'er forget—I said to her:
"Well, good-bye,[5] my fair, my lovéd one!
'Tis God's will that life should sunder us,
But we'll meet, I hope, some day again!"

Deep and hot her face flushed suddenly,
Next—as 'twere with snow-sheet slow bespread—
Sobbing like to one of sense bereft,
On my breast in pain she flung herself.

"Go not! Wait, belovéd falcon bright!
Time to numb the blow, to deaden it! . . ."
And deep down my spirit sank in me,
Failed my breath and all my utterance. . . .

A SONG

— ⏑ — ⏑ ⏑
— ⏑ — ⏑ ⏑

Where, my days, are you,
Days of spring-tide sweet,
Nights of summer-time,
Blissful, halcyon?
Where, my life, art thou,
Joy belov'd of me,
Scarlet dawn of my
Fiery youthfulness?
Ah, how proud was I
In those olden days,
Brave, confronting the
Dim futurity!
I foresaw in it
Deep blue eyes a-shine,
Dreams of happiness
Soared up endlessly.
But 'mid spring have I
Brought to wreck all thy
Bloom of youthfulness,
Life so crystalline.
And I, lacking thee,
Watch distressfully
How night's gloominess
Comes, day finishing.

TO——

⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ —
⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑

Alone, thou art now gone another road:
For thy delights and base enjoyments,
For languid lust without a spark of love,
Thou hast selected other men.
But shall this road continue long for thee?
What imprint does it leave of value in thy soul?
Has one of thy selected favourites
Remained with thee, devoted, true,
Prepared to sacrifice himself
For thy salvation, thy relief?
Where is he? Let me meet him now
With arms outstretched, and bless you both
For walking hand in hand through life. . . .

But no! thou art alone, forsaken,
Alone—above a precipice,
In mad distress, soul-tossed, but vainly
Demanding help from enemies,
And moving desperate on and on,
Towards thy peril and thy end.
Give me thy hand; there's always time
To save thee from thy ruinous course.
How cold it is, thy trembling hand! . . .
'Tis hard to walk with thee unblushing,
Observed by jeering, scorning crowds! . . .
But I am steadfast; I am ready
To stay, devoted, at thy side,
And I shall lead thee once again
Out from the pit of baneful sin.
And once again thou wilt be here,
Mid blissful happiness and glee,
Reshining on my firmament—
A star above my road and me.

FROM "THE WARRIOR'S SONG"

— ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ ⏑
— ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ ⏑

Father, mother, now farewell to ye!
And farewell to thee, my lovéd one!
And old forests, steppes, farewell to ye!
Life and youth, the dear white world and all![6]

Hail to thee, my comrade bayonet!
Serve me as thou servedst faithfully
My dear father in Suvorov's days,
And my grandfather the warrior.

And my sister sabre, hail to thee!
Let us have our fill of fighting hot;
Let us forth the wicked foe to drive,
Drink his goblet's brew of heathendom.[7]

If my lot's to lay my head alow,
Let me lay it not on mother-earth,
But upon a heap (God willing it)
Of the corpses of our enemy.

THE NIGHT

— ⏑ — ⏑ ⏑
— ⏑ — ⏑ ⏑

Not a glance at me,
But her song did tell
How her husband beat
Her in jealousy.

While she sang, the moon
Poured its beaminess;
Full of passion sweet
Was night's dreaminess.

And the garden green
Black and waste did look.
Image sinister,
Thence a face did look.

Ghastly gaped his smile
With teeth chattering.
Glowed the eyes of him,
Sparks hot-scattering.

Like an oak, towards
Us he movéd then. . . .
Baneful husband that
Phantom provéd then.

Through my bones a cold
Thrill thereby I felt.
Chainéd to the floor,
Witless why, I felt.

But the moment he
Wide the door did fling
Leapt I on him—dead
To the floor did fling.

" Why dost tremble, sweet,
Like a leaf at him,
Looking, childlike, with
Awestruck grief at him?

" Nevermore will he
Be a spy on us,
At the midnight hour
Come and pry on us."

" Oh, I know not. . . . All
Sense is flying me. . . .
In my sight are two
Husbands eyeing me:

" Lying murdered here
Blood doth smother one. . . .
In the garden—see!—
Stands another one! . . ."

on his mother's side, a rich aristocratic lady, became ardently attached to the boy, and undertook all the responsibility for his education, rejecting any co-operation with his father. She declined to see the mutual affection between the man and his son, and allowed them to meet only on very rare occasions. This enmity was a very sore point in the boy's heart from his earliest days.

Deprived of the company of other children, delicate, most conscientiously instructed, L'èrmontov remained quite solitary with regard to his inner world, which seemed strange to all grown-up people around him. His grandmother complained that "he loved no one." . . . She spent £400 yearly on the linguistic education alone of the boy, and the foreign *gouverneurs* who lived in his home found no difficulties in instructing him or in implanting any "noble tastes and refined manners" in him; but when he saw anyone ordering or inflicting a punishment on a serf, he would attack them in a rage of indignation, with a knife, stones, or any weapon. He knew French, German, and English like his native tongue in his early 'teens; at that time he passionately studied Schiller in the original and wrote *Menschen und Leidenschaften*, a Russian drama with a German name, depicting the pathetic circumstances of his father's family life. But in his fifteenth year, just before his home education was followed by the "University Pension" in Moscow, he wrote in his notes:

"In the Russian folk-lore, told from mouth to

mouth, there is probably more than in the whole of the French literature."

It was the Caucasus that made the spark of Heaven burn up in the boy's heart, and led him to writing poetry. He was ten years old when he first went to that land with his grandmother, for the benefit of her health. The gorgeous nature of the Caucasus and the picturesque, passionate atmosphere about its native tribes were the first impressions of the outer world which came as something both lovable and responsive into his boy's life entirely devoid of comradeship. Further trips to that country fostered his love for writing verse, which was rapidly turning into an instinctive way of self-expression.

When at the "University Pension" in Moscow, in his fifteenth and sixteenth year, L'èrmontov filled his exercise-books with poetry; all his writings of that time reflected a deeply impressionable, passionate, highly-strung nature, and views extraordinary for his age. . . . We shall return to this point presently.

The last period of acute enmity between his grandmother and father ended with the death of the latter away from his son. It was then that L'èrmontov became absorbed with the personality and poetry of Byron; and ever since, those who would see in his poetry nothing except a pose of a pessimist, would put it at Byron's door and call L'èrmontov merely an imitator. They did not pay any attention to his hint: "I am not Byron, but another exile, so far unknown to men." . . .

In his seventeenth and eighteenth years L'èrmontov was a student at the University proper, still in Moscow. Here he was known by his manner of consciously isolating himself from his comrades; but we see him launching on the shallow seas of fashionable society life.*

The succession of long nights spent at *mascarades*, balls, and supper-parties, seemed to exercise a double influence: on the one hand prompting the youth to write such drinking songs, epigrams, and impromptus as could not be passed into any Press on any account; and on the other, a growing power of detaching himself from vulgarity with extraordinary ease and giving himself up to the élan of inspiration and work. But into the gayest and lightest dissipations he would bring with him his atmosphere of flippant mockery and sarcasm.

During his second year at the University he got into trouble with an unpopular professor; the details of that case were never cleared up properly, but the poet-scholar had to leave. He went to St. Petersburg and joined the smart and fashionable Yunkers' School. The more adventurous military career must have been in his mind before then; the books and albums of his boyhood are full of sketches of a militant nature; and, on entering the Yunkers' School, he wrote:

"This may not bring me to my first and foremost

* L'èrmontov never suffered from lack of means; his grandmother supplied him with plenty; in the course of his military training he received over £1,000 from her yearly, and had carriage and horses and a lackey at his service.

aim (a literary career), but it will serve the final one: it is certainly more pleasant to die with a bullet in one's chest than to fade away exhausted with old age."

The don't-care atmosphere of the aristocratic marcian establishment fitted in with the strange cutting manners of the youth, and he was welcome to join the dash-and-go "military education" of the night-parties as one already initiated. But on many other nights they would find him taking refuge in some remote and empty class-room engrossed in his own studies and writings, which lasted till the early hours. Some of his most poetic poems (for instance, *The Angel*) were written at that time of his life, and even *The Demon* was begun and half completed on those school nights of concealment.

After finishing this course of military training, at the age of nineteen, L'èrmontov received his officer's degree in the regiment of the snobs and bloods, the Life Guard Hussars. It was in that year that a prominent literary man was shown the unsigned manuscript of *The Demon*, and was "startled by the vividness of the tale and the sonorous music of the verse." The author turned out to be "a hussar with the first pair of epaulettes on his shoulders; somewhat square and angular in build, but alert, sparklingly witty, and possessing a great power of thought."

Presently, several of L'èrmontov's poems appeared in the periodicals (but not the unfinished *Demon*), and a satire in the form of a comedy was banished by the

censor; then not only the literary circles, but even that same volatile society which hitherto kept an eye on him just for his "naughtiness," looked with keen expectation at the new poet.

One of the poems of that time is very unique: it is the author's prayer in dedicating a girl to the Virgin. It is so beautifully sincere and simple in its religious mood, so "womanly pure," that the superficial observers who judged L'èrmontov exclusively by his witticisms and debauchery shrugged their shoulders and declared that he was merely posing in his seriousness, whether pessimistic or idealistic. They did not understand that his sanctuary was his supreme elation of love for a girl who answered his feelings by friendship. The idea of marriage bonds was harrowing to L'èrmontov's mind. . . . To him real love was something above it; his Vàr'en'ka, who married another man, was a spirit kindred to his in his own way. It was her he dedicated to the Virgin, and these beautiful relations have found a reflection in several other poems as well.

In the course of these five years of his service in the Life Guards regiment in St. Petersburg, L'èrmontov translated Byron's *The Dying Gladiator* and one of the *Hebrew Melodies;* also some poems of Heine and Goethe, with a great mastery of pen.

Then came the winter of 1837, bringing with it Pùshkin's death. It came like a blow. L'èrmontov was amongst those struck with pain and indignation to the highest degree. In this mood he wrote a

poem *On Pùshkin's Death*, which instantly became widely known—not through the Press, but through people copying it one from another. The last sixteen lines of that powerful poem (added to it in a few minutes after the poet's conversation with one of those who condemned Pùshkin) brought on a change in L'èrmontov's fate: in them he flung the accusation in the great national loss straight in the face of "those standing, a greedy crowd, round the throne, the hangmen of Freedom, Genius, and Fame, hiding themselves under the shelter of the law, and forcing righteous judgment and truth into silence."

L'èrmontov was arrested, tried, and banished (in the same officer's rank, but with an "inferior" regiment) to the Caucasus. The Caucasus! Again that intense, majestic beauty, as if purposely destined to inspire the genius that could not find the right sap for its full development on Northern soil.

New poems now came flying to the capital from the magnificent South pulsating with the atmosphere of human passions that throb in the midst of passionate Nature. No geography or ethnology books could give such a vivid picture of the Caucasus as one gets through L'èrmontov's poetry and prose. To quote an Arab saying, "They turn our hearing into seeing."

Then it dawned upon educated Russia that L'èrmontov the poet was a man she could be proud of; his banishment had the necessary effect upon the minds of those who need some striking incident on which to mould their opinions.

But literary success did not impress L'èrmontov in the least. Fame was nothing to him.

Presently appeared the "*Song of the Tzar' Ivàn Vasìlyevich, the Young Oprìchnik, and the Brave Merchant Kalàshnikov*," thanks, we must add, to the pressing influence of the old poet Jukòvski, as the political censure continued regarding the young officer as a none too reliable person apt to express in his poetry some opinions of too radical a hue. This song, relating a dramatic episode of Ivàn the Terrible's times, is intensely Russian in its subject, speech, and its national musical swing: every line (with just a few exceptions) begins with an anapæst, winds along with insertions of choreys, dactyls, and some odd unstressed syllables, and ends in a dactyl foot, unrhymed (see Introduction, p. xxvii). Its entirely objective graphic power in conveying, as if by the mouth of ballad-singers, the atmosphere of yore, and in describing a free fight on the banks of the Moskvà River, made all the critics, then and afterwards, acknowledge L'èrmontov as a first-rate exponent in the art of epic; some find the *Song of Kalàshnikov* equal in its qualities to Homer's *Iliad*. It certainly places the author high above the personally lyric element; it is art itself, pure art, stripped of all the individual veiling with which suffering humanity is apt to enwrap its creations—a thing which the poets and artists, after all, have the indisputable right to do!

It is a great pleasure to point out to my reader that the *Song of Kalàshnikov* is translated into

English very adequately. A good many of the old, essentially Russian words or forms of words and twists of phrases in it naturally remain untranslated, because nothing in the world outside the Russian language could ever substitute them; but nevertheless the swing and colouring of the whole thing are given vividly—in spite of the inevitable lack of dactyls. I must say that I can attribute this achievement only to the fact that the translator, Mme. E. L. Voynich, has a Slavonic ear and a Slavonic understanding of the original, besides her poetical capacity. The *Song* forms a part of the booklet *Six Lyrics from the Ruthenian*, etc., published by Elkin Matthews, 1911. Below I shall quote some parts of it as a sample; but if the present work of mine serves to arouse in my readers an interest in Russian poetry, they ought to get that booklet and *read themselves into* that *Song*.

At the age of twenty-three, while in the Caucasus, L'èrmontov finished his other long work *The Demon*, the greater part of which was written when he was at the Yunkers' School. He certainly needed the Caucasus to improve and finish it as he did—*and* something more besides the Caucasus. . . . We are coming to it presently.

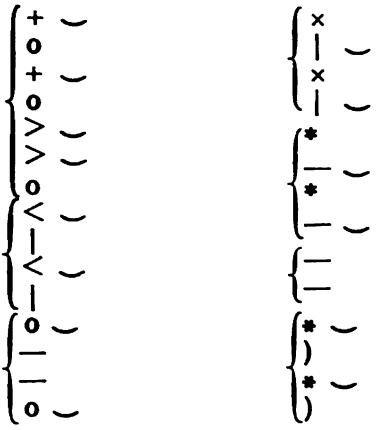
The personality of that "Spirit of Exile" is quite different from the unpleasantly satanic one of Mephisto and Lucifer: no repulsively cutting smile over a pointed chin which one wontedly imagines of these ancestors of L'èrmontov's Demon. With all his contempt for earth, the Russian Demon is fascinating in his

looks, words, and feelings. He is "like lucid summer twilight," and, before everything else, always involuntarily musing about his former days in heaven, and vainly seeking some relief in the desert of time and space into which he is cast out *alone:* he is the embodiment of the idea of loneliness in a proud soul. His sudden and overpowering love for the Grùzian girl Tamàra inflames him with the desire of abandoning his pride, of opening his heart to Good, of making peace with Heaven! . . . Here comes in, in the poem, a splendidly characteristic feature: L'èrmontov does not let you forget that the Angel and the Demon had been brothers. They are outlined in touches both acute and subtle. The Demon, moved by his love, is on the verge of humility and of opening his heart to Goodness, when he all at once comes back to his pride and hatred, only due to the tone of enmity by which the Angel meets him. L'èrmontov's Angel is not irreproachable goodness altogether; he can hate and scorn too. Being Tamàra's celestial guardian, he becomes but human and understandable to us when he meets the Demon (whom he might have conquered by greeting him with heavenly grace) with icy contempt and threat. This kinship between the spirits of good and of evil, so natural to our present conceptions, is delicately underlined throughout this poem of nearly a century ago. The speeches of the Demon are resistless. No man on earth has ever thought of a more bewitching wooing, and our sex would be hard placed if men ever approached the Demon's cleverness!

The Russian speech of that poem is, in spite of its perfect musical rhythm, a classical prose at the same time. This is a very characteristic feature of L'èrmontov's works: you could not alter the words or their succession if you wanted to turn his verse into the best possible prose.

L'èrmontov would turn thrice in his grave if he could hear his *Demon* robbed of all its original metre and that stately naturalness of speech—which *has* been done by three translators! . . . Francis Storr (1894, Rivington, Percival and Co.), A. Condie Stephen (1875, Trübner and Co.), and Ellen Richter (1910, David Nutt), have done everything to show their absolute lack of understanding *what* and *how* L'èrmontov has said in his *Demon*. Hopelessly distorted metres throughout—to the extent of turning the Demon's speeches into polkas (Francis Storr)!—a lack of any swing, with the exception of winding up the lines with endless couplets of short rhymes—and, worst of all, platitudes upon platitudes! Not the unavoidable amount of some rephrasing, but writing new . . . "poetry." Ellen Richter has managed to turn the Demon and Tamàra into "'Arry and 'Arriett." It was actually a torment to study these "creations" (those critics who know Russian are invited to do it!)—and I could not force myself to give any quotations from them, lest my reader would get a distaste for the poem before he has read the bulk of it given below; however many places there are in it that might be improved, it is not made commonplace. *The Demon* is a lightly

flowing sonorous stream of iambic,* its lines grouped in different ways, varying all the time, in twos, threes, fours, fives, or, sometimes, sixes. The manner of rhyming in each group of lines is freely varied in its turn; it can be shown graphically by the following little scheme, in which similar marks stand for the long or short rhymes in each group:



It would be next to impossible to make the English words which convey the sense of the original fall into rhyme each time exactly where they do in each group of the Russian lines (the difference in the length of the Russian and the English words in itself makes it unachievable throughout a poem of this length); but considering L'èrmontov's manner of grouping the rhymes irregularly, I think that some of that freedom can be allowed to the trans-

* With the exception of the paragraph "In the boundless aerial ocean"—which makes a digression into trochee—one of the most fascinating speeches in Demon's wooing, and one of the most beautiful paragraphs in Russian poetry.

lator, as long as the exact metre and the general character of rhyming are followed.

But I hasten to warn my reader that I have achieved less rhyming in translating *The Demon* than in any other poems selected for this book; the individuality of this one will thus have to be gathered from its meaning and lilt alone. I know that my mixing the rhyming with mere assonance and with no-rhyming-at-all will be found absurd by a good many critics and poets—especially by those lovers of technique who can't be bothered with inspiration! . . . But mine was prompted by my *feeling* the original, and that *feeling* tells me: "Better a certain amount of unrhymed long endings than columns of most perfect short couplets: the Demon would not like them!" No, he would not; thus, he forms the bulk of the experiment which the translations in this volume present.

L'èrmontov's grandmother pleaded for a concise time of his exile so energetically that before one year had elapsed he was returned to his old regiment in St. Petersburg, where *The Demon* duly appeared. The author of such poems as this, and of the *Song of Kalàshnikov*, was now met by all branches of society with a tremendous interest, a strange shade of hatred weaving its way into the involuntary admiration! . . .

In 1838 came the poem *Duma*. It contains the gist of L'èrmontov's view on his contemporaries, and as a piece of art it occupies such a high place in

Russian literature that it would be impossible not to point it out here. It is the severest verdict on one's own generation one could possibly imagine. L'èrmontov's contemporaries *en masse* did not represent Russia at her best—this is true; but his lancet-like way of exposing the shallow side of human nature proves how deeply it hurt him, and how clear he was of the shortcomings of that lot of people to which he belonged, outwardly, himself. The *Duma* runs smoothly in that characteristic way of L'èrmontov's exquisitely *rhymed and scanned prose*, as it were; *i.e.*, not a single word would have to be altered or shifted if you wanted to write it out in prose. I don't think there is one educated person in our land who would not know it (or at least parts of it) by heart, whether agreeing with the poet's cutting criticism or not. I have tried to put it into English verse—and utterly failed: it would strike a literary English ear as "strange" and "unmusical." So I had to abandon it. Happily, chance made me come across Mr. Wilfrid Blair, who put it into verse for me word by word.

We often apply the epithet "iron" when talking about the *Duma:* its music rests entirely with the force of its thought and speech. After my reader has read *The Demon*, he may be interested in the contents of this poem as of one showing that L'èrmontov was not a snob parading in a cloak borrowed from Byron, but a thinker deep and cute. In spite of the outer difference between the romantic *Demon* and the pessimistic *Duma*, these two poems

are akin to each other, although the second deals with the earthly world only.

In February, 1840, L'èrmontov was challenged in the course of a ball by the son of the French Ambassador at the Russian Court. The insult is supposed to have been some rude witticism on the part of the poet. The duel began with swords and ended with pistols. L'èrmontov received just a scratch; he himself fired his shot in the air. He was arrested again, and the sentence of Emperor Nicholas I. was—banishment to the Caucasus, as before, without loss of military rank.

This last year of his life L'èrmontov lived in P'atigorsk, at the foot of the mountain range, a town forming the centre of a fashionable healing-springs district. There he wrote his novel in prose, *The Hero of Our Times*—the key to which we are only just approaching! . . . As a piece of art it is as great as his best poetry: there L'èrmontov the poet differs from Pùshkin the poet, because Pùshkin's prose gives no idea of the power of Pùshkin's poetry.

In the course of this second banishment L'èrmontov took active part in the then frequent fighting with the local Caucasian tribes, and showed striking courage alongside with perfect modesty. Inspired by the new experience, he wrote one of his most beautiful long poems on the subject (*Valèrik*).

Then came L'èrmontov's second duel, the exact reasons of which remained unrevealed. One thing clear about it was that he offended a somewhat posing officer, Major Martỳnov, who would not

stand L'èrmontov's jokes in the company of ladies. They say that the joke which led to the fatal end of the poet at the age of twenty-six referred to the wide silk sleeves of the Caucasian uniform, which Martỳnov was fond of throwing back in an effective gesture. L'èrmontov did not mean any enmity, and did not express any, till the very end; while his partner was full of wrath.

At this duel, L'èrmontov fired his shot in the air again; but Martỳnov aimed so long that the seconds called out: "Fire! or we shall separate you." Martỳnov fired, and L'èrmontov fell dead on the spot.

There appeared at first some difficulties about the burial of his body, as the local priesthood was inclined to consider death from duel as suicide. But the indignation of the crowds of grieved admirers of the poet who surrounded his home was so obvious that, if Martỳnov had not been arrested, he would have found it difficult to find a safe nook for himself.

The Hero of Our Times lives through a duel the impressions of which he later dissects with icy-cold logic; but this part of the novel should not be regarded as an effective conscious preparation for what happened shortly afterwards in reality, although the semblance of the circumstances happens to be extraordinary.

Now we can approach a most interesting point about L'èrmontov. In 1909 there appeared in St. Petersburg a small book by our well-known modern thinker, publicist, and writer, D. Merejkòvski. It bears the strange title *The Poet of Superhumanity, L'èrmon-*

tov. . . . This epithet has not been attached to L'èrmontov by Merejkòvski: his little book came as a striking justification of L'èrmontov, after another thinker, V. Solovyòv, had declared L'èrmontov's poetry a " superhuman, mad challenge to the higher power." . . . In black and white, Solovyòv said that " Martýnov was Heaven's weapon sent to punish blood-thirstiness and devilish lust."

A good thing this wrathful essay *has* appeared, because it has called forth, as I have just said, Merejkòvski's work. I am sure the latter has come to many as a strange, uncanny, yet clear and irresistible ray of light cast on L'èrmontov. All that hitherto had been an unaccountable fascination in his poetry seems to be explained by this entirely new insight. The things which Merejkòvski says in his essay are so enchanting that I could not possibly offer my reader a more interesting critical analysis. I shall just retell the gist of his booklet. At the same time Merejkòvski's thoughts breathe of that instinctive love for L'èrmontov which one part (the vast majority) of the educated Russians have always experienced and enjoyed, but against which pedantic orthodoxy has frenziedly struggled, trying to keep that love locked out from their own hearts.

(Merejkòvski will, I hope, forgive my mentioning that I heard several of the modern Russian *intelligentzia* delightedly characterize him as being as " clever as the Devil !") Here is what he says:

" Something like Solovyòv's attitude towards L'èrmontov must have been in the minds of the

poet's contemporaries and successors. Dostoyèvski mentions L'èrmontov as 'the spirit of wrath.' Nicholas I. (who paid much kind attention to Jukòvski and Pùshkin) expressed grim pleasure at L'èrmontov's death. Solovyòv's pen proved full as deadly as Martỳnov's bullet; and only recently* our society has begun feeling in the dark the links which join us to L'èrmontov. His time has yet to come: so far he has been the scapegoat of Russian literature. . . .

"Dostoyèvski's call was, 'Be humble! Submit, subside, proud man!' But it seems that of submitting we all of us had plenty in Russia. We were taught humility by Nature, by history, by Byzantian monks, by Tartar Khans, by Moscow Tsars, by Petersburg Emperors; humility was being steadily taught us by Peter I., by Biron, by Arakchèyev, by Nicholas I.; now (1909) it is being taught us by the 'punitive expeditions' and daily executions. All Russian literature is busy teaching us humility. Every Russian writer who began by revolt promptly subsided and repented: Pùshkin wrote his *Ode to Liberty*, and subsided; Gògol' wrote Part I. of his *Dead Souls*, and then burned the manuscript of Part II., thus tacitly submitting to the principle of serfdom; Dostoyèvski revolted, went to Siberia, and returned a preacher of humility; Tolstòy revolted, and ended by non-resistance to evil. . . . Here is the one single man in Russian literature who never gave in and never submitted to his last breath: L'èrmontov; and he,

* This was written in 1909.

the Cain of Russian Literature, has been killed by Abel, the spirit of humility. . . .

" Solovyòv's passionate accusation thrown at L'èrmontov's memory—' Devilish superman !'—is only another proof of the fact that the struggle between superhumanism and deo-humanism is the eternal problem of life. . . ."

Merejkòvski's attitude towards L'èrmontov's " superhumanism " is diametrically opposed to that of Solovyòv's, and that is where it helps my attempt to make L'èrmontov's personality stand out clearly in these pages.

Merejkòvski's idea is that L'èrmontov *could remember the past of his eternity*. . . . This previous existence is excluded from the ordinary human mind; we dwell on the eternity yet to come ! But L'èrmontov never did: his mind was concentrated on what he saw left behind him. . . .

An intimate knowledge of L'èrmontov's poetry does fill one's heart with a delightfully uncanny feeling; you begin to love it unaccountably from those very days when his verse is introduced to you as an ordinary subject of your class of literature. This admiration and attachment do not go even if some outward influences in the course of your youth teach you to hate him as a " spring of poison " (to quote Solovyòv). . . . To L'èrmontov, eternity was *his* eternity. He knew ' the harrowing threat of fruitless ages.' . . . As a boy of fifteen he more than once hinted in his memoirs: ' Oh, if I only could forget the unforgettable !' His Demon remembers

so much that 'of remembrance he is wearied.' By his mouth, L'èrmontov says: 'Forget the past? . . . But God would never grant him this relief—nor he forgetfulness accept.' . . .

No, he would not: with all his thoughts focussed on the longing to forget the unforgettable, which would make his existence a normal one, he nevertheless involuntarily clings to his prerogative—the knowledge of something beyond this world: 'I live by what is death to others. . . .'

"By the mouth of Pechòrin (*the Hero of our Days*) L'èrmontov cannot help giving himself away in the brief, simple statement: 'I never forget anything—anything.' In his exquisite poem *The Angel* (p. 208) he speaks of the song which the angel was singing when carrying a soul to be born into this world. 'And the sounds of that song remained in the young soul for ever, though without words.' In the short poem *There's no one*, so familiar to every Russian (it is translated below), his despair is that no love lasts through eternity; this is not a metaphor: he means *his* eternity. He knows of a kind of existence which is neither this life, nor death as promised by Christianity. That existence is not deprived of love: L'èrmontov's idea (or knowledge) is that the less earthly, the deeper and greater the passion. . . ." The reader will easily trace this in the Demon's speeches, as well as the Christian sophistry on love which L'èrmontov reflects in the last words of the triumphant angel.

The *Elegy* (translated below) is a thing which the

Russians quote on many different occasions, but only instinctively, unaccountably fascinated by its strange beauty; it really remains incomprehensible until one thinks of Merejkòvski's explanation. No one before has attempted or troubled to find one; it is only now that L'èrmontov has appeared as a book just opened for the first time. Wordsworth in his *Ode* and Adelaide Anne Proctor in her *Unseen* mention their intimations of eternity; but they speak of these as coming to them *from outside of this world*, realizing them with the mortal part of their mind, as it were; while L'èrmontov does not "realize," or philosophize on, any "outside" world: *he speaks from it*, as one belonging to it, while he realizes his temporary existence in this world to which he does not belong. It is not surprising, therefore, that Wordsworth's *Ode* has not inspired any thinker with an attempt to make a special study and to give an insight into his innermost self, like that which Merejkòvski has given concerning L'èrmontov.

Our poet did not openly insist on his exceptional attitude, not at all. This attitude (granting that Merejkòvski is fundamentally right in his idea) was a torment to him; but he involuntarily let it leak out through numerous hints, again and again, and it naturally made him feel very odd, very much of a stranger amongst others. . . .

"Usually," says Merejkòvski, "artists will find their creation beautiful because nothing like it has existed before; while L'èrmontov feels the beauty just where it had been always. That is why there is

something so individual, so inimitable in him when he speaks of Nature. . . . 'For several moments spent amidst the wilderness of rocks where I played as a child I would give Paradise and eternity.' . . . He is in love with Nature. He speaks of the horror in the 'stone breast' of the mountains where Man has pierced it with his spade; and of the torment of the bodies of palms cut to pieces and burning in a bonfire. To him 'a golden fleecy cloud stays overnight on the chest of a giant cliff'; and 'clouds whisper to each other like shadows'; he 'longs to blend in an embrace with the storm' and 'catches lightnings with his hands.' . . ."

"After all, it is a non-earthly love for earth, probably the only one in the world's poetry. If the dead continue to love the earth they must love in this way, which is opposite to the Christian earthly love for Heaven. Christianity is a movement *from here—thither;* L'èrmontov's poetry is *from there—hither.* He seemed to be not-quite-a-man enclosed in a man's shell; a creature from some world of different dimensions, a meteor that flashed through life. He tried hard to conceal this, because people do not forgive anyone for being unlike them. As animals flair the scent of man, so people scented in L'èrmontov one not of their species. Hence his extreme reticence which others hated as his 'pride.' Many were unable to stand his look and would often leave the room to get a rest from the uncanny weight of his presence; to some it would give a physical shock like the touch of Leyden jars. . . ."

"People attributed this to 'falsehood' in him. 'L'èrmontov is untruthful, always, with everybody' —such was the general judgment of his contemporaries. They thought he was posing, trying to look like one above them; while, in reality, it was just his tragedy that he felt out of place amongst everyone here, and, without giving away his secret, tried to be like everyone else. This clearly explains his escapades into the sphere of most questionable dissipations, and his cruel attitude towards a girl in one certain case for which he was blamed, hated, cursed—by the shallow society of his day, by the critics, by the religious, all of them imagining that *they* were high above him, and that he was a shameless atrocity! They had no idea of the pathetic situation which must have caused L'èrmontov to rub his hands, mentally, in breathless joy, after each base experiment: 'Ah! . . . Now I've got them! . . . Now they do believe that I am one of them!' . . .

"The fourth dimension seemed to be squeezed into the three for a while, and the icy horror of eternity and the inane temporarily forgotten in the warmth of human vulgarity. . . ."*

Some people have had the experience of knowing young children who will talk in a most uncouth way about something which is absolutely incomprehensible, yet which seems to be perfectly familiar to them.

* By the way, Merejkòvski calls these efforts of L'èrmontov надрывъ, which is an excellent illustration of this untranslatable Russian word (see *The Russians and their Language*, p. 150).

Merejkòvski thinks it is because small children are not yet so far removed from the past of their eternity as they get removed later on by their life here. It is thus that he explains that child-like quality which, seemingly unaccountably, dwelt in L'èrmontov side by side with his pessimism, bitterness, sadness, "falseness," so-called flippancy and sarcasm. He was known to have had a perfectly child-like smile; he could play children's games to the state of self-forgetfulness, and did so the whole day on the eve of his duel.

"He had no fear of death, because he *knew* that there was no death. His child-like fatalism and undauntedness have been amply proved by his behaviour in warfare at the Caucasus. It was obvious that fear of death never entered his mind. 'I shall never forget that calm, almost joyous expression with which L'èrmontov faced the revolver pointed at him a few seconds before he fell dead,' wrote his second, Prince Vasìl'chikov.

"'What a tender soul that man possesses!' was what B'el'ìnski thought of L'èrmontov. And his grandmother could never lift her eyelids again till her last day, she cried so much after his peril. These people must have known L'èrmontov's eyes shine with Heaven's wisdom and unearthly love."

L'èrmontov's Demon never laughs and never lies: there is something child-like, genuine about him. After him came the "devil" of Dostoyèvski (Ivàn Karamàzov's "devil"), and the wicked, sneering devil that peeps out here and there through Gògol's

pages. They are both of them "Russian devils"! They are very different from L'èrmontov's supernational Demon: because they are *devils* pure and simple, and "if you undressed them you would be sure to find a tail—a long and smooth tail, like that of a Dutch hound," as Ivàn Karamàzov says about *his* devil, in spite of the latter's being a striking philosopher! But, then, this philosopher is a чортъ, and so is Gògol's spirit of mischief and cunning, whom Russian national literature is always trying to outplay and overcome—while no one would ever think of applying this term for the devil to L'èrmontov's Demon! Nor would one connect with him for a single moment a tail, nor fiery tights, nor a sneer, nor a cunning smile, nor a withering laugh—all of which "ordinary devils have." . . . L'èrmontov's Demon is beautiful, because "he is not thought out, but *suffered out* by the poet himself," as Merejkòvski says: "He is hardly a devil at all." . . .

"There is a legend that once upon a time there was a fight between God and Satan, and some of the angels in Paradise found themselves unable to decide whose side to take. In order to help them to make up their minds, God sent them to be born on earth where they should dwell for a while in a *limited* world. . . . Very likely, the soul of L'èrmontov had been in his past one of these spirits. That is why his duality was always such a burden to him."

This quaint suggestion of Merejkòvski explains why L'èrmontov's Demon is a 'sad exile from Paradise,' 'like lucid summer twilight: not night, nor day; not

sun, nor gloom'; it explains ever so much of what the Demon says to Tamàra! . . .

There are many more explanations both uncanny and fascinating in Merejkòvski's little yet unique book, such as L'èrmontov's extraordinary deep passion for a girl of nine when he was ten ("I did not know whence she came" . . .) and his having drawn the detailed picture of his death from a bullet wound in more than one of his works; most uncanny is Merejkòvski's idea that L'èrmontov "*remembered the future* of eternity"! But, as it is, even without approaching the depths of mysticism, this character sketch has grown to an unintended length. Let us wind it up.

"Pùshkin is the day-luminary of Russian poetry, and L'èrmontov the night-luminary," as Merejkòvski exhaustively compares them in one phrase. "It is high time to rise after our final stage of humility and start on our last revolt, and remember that besides Pùshkin we have L'èrmontov and his message to the world. . . . Because, in the end, Satan will make peace with God. What will then work as a reconciling factor between them? Love."

THE DEMON

PART I

⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ } *varying*
⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — } *in order.*

Exile from Paradise, the Demon
Flew sadly o'er the sinful world,
And visions of his days in Heaven
In vivid swarms around him whirled:
Those memories of happy ages
When he, 'mid guiltless cherubim,
Shone in the empyrean realm;
When comets through the azure fleeting
Loved to exchange a joyous greeting
And a caressive smile with him;
When, thirsting for eternal knowledge,
He keenly followed through the mist
The caravans of wandering planets
Thrown into vastness; when he list—
The happy first-born of creation—
To voice of Faith and Love, and knew
No doubt or hatred; and there was
No threat of ages fruitless, dreary,
Awaiting him in even rows—
And much of what the Demon knows. . . .
But of remembering he was weary.
An outcast, he has wandered long
Through desert space; without cessation,
The filing centuries went fast
Like moments; in their even throng
The same—approaching, here, or past.

Commanding Earth, so poor and weak,
He planted sin without enjoyance;
His art has never met contést,
Has quickly lost its charm and zest,
And has become a mere annoyance.

And over the Caucasian ranges
Flew the exile from Paradise;
Beneath, Kazbèk,[1] like diamond's edges,
Flashed its eternal snow and ice;
Black as a creviced den confining
A serpent, deep below ran twining
The narrow chasm of Daryàl;[2]
And down its way, like lion roaring,
There leapt the stream of Tèrek, foaming,
With a frayed main along its back.
Both mountain beast and soaring eagle
Circling against the azure sky
Harked to the calling[3] of the waters;
And golden clouds, due north, all day
Flew rapidly along its way
From far-off southern countries roaming.
And closely crowding gloomy rocks,
Mysteriously still and pensive,
Inclined their heads with snowy locks,
Watching the flickering waves, attentive.
And castle-towers on the cliffs
Scowled with dark menace through the hazes—
The giants, there to dominate
Where Caucasus its gateway raises!
Both wild and glorious was the world
Around him; but the haughty ghost
Contemptuously cast a glance
On the creations of his Lord,
And naught of what he saw or thought
Reflected in his countenance.

Another view of living beauty
He sees beneath him far expand:
A carpet woven of rich splendour,
Luxurious vales of Grùzia's land.
A blissful, brilliant nook of Earth!
'Mid stately ancient pillared ruins,
Relucent, gurgling rivulets run
And ripple over motley pebbles;
Between them, rose-trees where the birds
Sing love-songs, while the ivy girds
The stems, and crowns the foliage-temples
Of green chinàra;[4] and the herds
Of timid red-deer seek the boon
Of mountain eaves in sultry noon;
And sparkling life, and rustling leaves,
And hum of voices hundred-toned,
The sweetly breathing thousand plants,
Voluptuous heat of skies sun-laden,
Caressive dew of gorgeous night,
And stars—as clear as eyes of maiden,
As glance of Grùzian maiden bright!
But all this brilliancy of Nature
Awoke not in the Demon's soul
A moment's joy, nor tender feeling:
He felt no thrill and heard no call;
And everything that met his eyes
He did but hate, or else despise.

A stately house with court before
Is grey Gudàl's ancestral dwelling,
Of many tears and suffering telling
Of cringing serfs who laboured sore.
From early morn long shadows steal
Towards the slopes of neighbouring mountains.
Some steps hacked rudely in the stone
Lead from the corner-turret down
To swift Aràgva's crystal fountains.

The young Princess Tamàra daily,
Her white veil fluttering down the path,
Descends the steps and fetches water
From clear Aràgva's[5] azure bath.

Perched on a crag the castle grimly
O'erlooks the valleys far below;
But Zurnà[6] pipes and wines do flow—
A festival to-day he's holding:
The old Gudàl will give in marriage
Tamàra. All their kin are there,
Invited in the feast to share.
The spacious roof is decked with carpets.
Amid her friends, the whole day long
Tamàra spent in play and song.
The sun, behind a far-off mountain,
Is half set in a sea of gold.
The maidens in a round are sitting
And, to a lilting tune they're singing,
They clap in time. Tamàra takes
Her tambourine, and nimbly shakes
It o'er her head; with fleeting motion
Now trips it lighter than a bird,
Now holds a-sudden in her dance,
And casts a shining, roguish[7] glance
From underneath the jealous lashes;
Her eyebrow curves in coy expression,
Her lithesome shape does swift incline,
And o'er the carpet slides and flashes
Her little foot of form divine.
. . . . . .
. . . . . .

It was the last time she would dance:
To-morrow's morn would see her enter
A different world: wedlock would bring
The fate of servitude with it;
Gudàl's sole heiress, Freedom's darling,

She was to leave her home and dwelling,
Meet stranger kinsmen—and submit.
Across her face, vague tremors telling,
Doubt's shadows might be seen to flit;
Yet were her movements so expressive,
So stately, simple, and caressive,
That if the Demon were to fly
Her way, and chance to gaze upon her,
He'd call to mind his former kin,
Would turn away and heave a sigh. . . .

The Demon did behold her. . . . Rapture
And awe possessed him; and at once
The silent desert of his spirit
Rang suddenly with joyful[8] tones;
And once again the sacred grandeur
Of Love and Good and Beauty shone
Within his soul. All gloom was gone.
He stayed admiring. Blissful vision
Called forth a chain of former dreams,
And reminiscences of Heaven
Flowed on, anew, in dazzling streams:
Each thought, a star that glows and gleams.
As chained by some mysterious[9] power,
He felt a sadness strangely new—
As if the overwhelming shower
Of feelings rang with words he knew.[10]
Was this a sign of renovation?
Gone were the words of dread[11] temptation,
His mind no more in guile adept.
Will he forget his past? . . . But God
Would never grant him this relief,
Nor he forgetfulness accept.

* * * * * *

Th' impatient bridegroom, in great haste,
Has tired his steed: he cannot waste
A moment of his marriage feasting.

Aràgva's banks are safely reached.
Behind, the camels' stately line
Follows, with grace and caution stepping,
Laden with wedding presents fine.
Their little bells in evening glow
Are twinkling, tinkling sweet and low.

. . . . . .
. . . . . .

His steed, of rarest golden colour,
Is white with foam; he pricks his ears
And looks askance and snorts: he fears
The leaping waves deep in the hollow.
The path is parlous—narrow trace
Betwixt the rocks and river's race.
'Tis getting late. The scarlet glow
Has left the summits' ice and snow;
A fog has risen round the place.
The caravan has quickened pace.

Here is the chapel by the roadway:
Since times of yore there rests in peace
Some prince slain out of hellish spite,
And now, a saint, upon his knees
A pleader 'fore the face of God:
Whene'er a wanderer trends this way,
To feast or battle, he will pray
Kneeling beside the pleader's relics;
And this will work a sacred charm
'Gainst Moslem sword or any harm.
But the betrothèd sped; unmindful
And careless of the rule and vow
He went his way. The Demon now
His fancy secretly[12] possessed:
The lover dreamt that he had pressed
His lips to his Tamàra's mouth. . . .
And then, abruptly, darted out
Two horsemen from a mountain chasm;

And following close came more . . . There rang
A shot! What was afoot? . . . The prince
Without a word whipped up his steed,
Stood in his stirrups with a clang . . .
A flintlock's polished barrel flashed,
And like an eagle straight he dashed
Into the fray to take the lead.
Another shot—a cry of pain
And groans, full-echoing down the valley. . . .
A space, and all was still again:
Meek Grùzians fled too wide to rally.

. . . . . .
. . . . . .

The festival is all confusion;
The maidens weep. The castle yard
Is crowded full. Whose is the steed,
Spur-gored and lashed and rid so hard,
That at the gates 'tis fallen dead?
Who is the rider cold and mute?
Traces of fray show in profusion
Upon his features swart and strong;
With blood his clothes are wet and red;
His hands are passionately clutching
In their last grip the horse's mane. . . .
Tamàra's[13] eyes had not for long
To wait to rest upon her lover!
Her prince had kept his word, though slain,
And to his bridal feast had come.
Alas! his life is gone for ever,
He mounts his steed never again! . . .

As if with Heaven's thunderbolt
The festal household struck and reeling;[14]
Tamàra, fallen on her bed,
Sobs with a lorn and piteous feeling.

Tear follows tear in painful fleetness,
Of grief she cannot have her fill.
Then, of a sudden, she is still:
She hears a voice of magic sweetness:
" Cease crying, child, in fruitless dolour;
Withhold thy tears: they burn the colour
Of virgin cheeks,[15] and dull thy view;
They cannot bring to life the dead—
They are not drops of magic dew.
Thy love is far; he cannot hear thee,
He knows not, cares not for thy plight:[16]
The light of Heaven now caresses
His fleshless eyes' immortal sight.
He listens to the holy singing:
What are life's trivial dreams and sighs,
Or maiden sobs through quiet ringing,
To him, the guest of Paradise?
Forsooth, the destiny of mortals,
Believe me, angel upon earth,
Is not—not for a single moment
Of thy dear child-like sorrow worth!
In the boundless azure ocean,
Without rudder, without sails,[17]
Gently float in stately motion
Choirs of stars through misty ways.
'Cross the boundless fields of Heaven,
Moving leisurely through space,
Flocks of fleecy clouds evasive
Idly pass, and leave no trace.
Hour of meeting, hour of parting,
Are no joy or grief to them;
Time to come begets no wishes,
Past finds no regret, with them.
At this hour of wearing sorrow,
Visualize them in thy need,
And remain to earthly trouble
Cold like them—they pay no heed.

As soon as Night throws silky veiling
O'er Caucasus, and all the world
Grows still and fairy-like, bewitchèd
By Nature's magic wand and word;
As soon as zephyrs flutter shyly
Across the faded grass, and gaily
Flies out of it the lurking bird;
As soon as under vine and maize
The flowers of night find dew, and raise
Unfolding petals with relief;
As soon as from behind the mountains
The golden crescent glides, and steals
A glance upon thee furtively—
I shall fly down each night to thee,
Shall guard till dawn[18] thy virgin slumber,
And on thy lashes dreams of amber
I'll waft, to woo them prettily. . . ."

His speech has ceased to sound, and melted
Away into the darkened air.
Tamàra to her feet has leapt,
Looking around. Her fixèd stare
Reflected more than fright, emotion,
Or passion: seething in commotion
And all aflame her feelings were.
Her soul from former ties was tearing,
Flowed fire along her veins . . . And still
The voice, so sweetly new and daring,
Did seem[20] to sound: and so until,
Towards the morn, the longed for sleep
Came down to soothe her wearied lashes.
But even then it stirred her thought
With an uncouth, prophetic vision:
A comer silent and elusive,
Of beauty strange to human race,
Was over her discreetly bending;
His loving eyes, his yearning face,

Were full of sadness, understanding,
And sympathy and friendly grace.
'Twas not a guest in Heaven dwelling,
Her guardian angel low descending:
There was no halo shining round
His curls, in rainbow rays enwound.
Nor was it face of hellish spirit
Suffering in torture, evil's doom;
He was like lucid summer twilight:
Not day, nor night; not sun, nor gloom!

PART II

Tamàra.

"Oh, father, leave thy threats! have mercy!
Blame not thy daughter. See, I cry:
'Tis not the first time. . . . All these wooing
Men, who, to win me, from afar
Come from the farthest ends of Grùzia,
Hasten in vain. . . . I shall not be
The wife of anyone, believe me.
There are so many willing girls
Among the Grùzian beauty's pearls!
Oh, pray, my father, stop thy railing!
Thou seest that day by day I'm failing.
I'm haunted with dire poisonous dreams:
A hellish[21] spirit has the power
Of torturing me with them, it seems. . . .
I'm perishing! Have pity! Send me
To humble nunnery's holy sway:
There I shall be in Saviour's keeping,
He will behold my grief and weeping;[22]
To Him I'll come in my dismay.
Life's joyance all is doomed to quelling. . . .
Beneath the holy church-towers boom
Let dusky cell become my dwelling,
My early grave and life-long tomb."

To grant her wish, her grieving kinsmen
Have brought Tamàra to a lone
And peaceful nunnery. A humble
Hairshirt concealed her charm and form.
But under it, unchanged, as ever,
Just as beneath the silk brocade,
A lawless vision would invade
Her heart and make it beat in tremor.
Before the altar, midst the praying,
And tapers shining in the holy
Hour of worship, she would hear
The voice she feared, but knew so well;
Under the temple's shadowed arches
There sometimes flitted—silent, clear—
The phantom, with his former spell;
And in the bluish haze of incense
He gently glimmered like a star.
Luring to some unknown existence.[23]

. . . . . .
. . . . . .

Both near the nunnery and far
The glens and mountains spread in silence.
Pale purple-hued the snowy range,
Clear-cut against the sky; and strange
And beautiful its evening change
Into a veil of gold and scarlet.
And over all Kazbèk the Haughty
Carried above the clouds his head,
His turban and his tsar's brocade
All ice, and gold-embroiderèd![24]

But, filled with sinful thought, the heart
Of the unhappy nun Tamàra
In joys supreme no more takes part,
The world she sees by shadows marred;
In Nature all is cause for torment.

First rays of dawn, or midnight moment,
Both see her prostrate on the floor,
And sobbing 'fore the holy ikon.
And in the silence of the night
The moaning of a soul thus pained
Troubles a passer-by, who prates:
" Is it a mountain spirit, chained
Within a cave, who thus is wailing ?" . . .
His hearing keen, and courage failing,
He spurs his spent horse past the gates.

. . . . . .
. . . . . .

The evening mist had thrown its veiling
Of white on Grùzian hill and dale.
Obedient to his wont, the Demon
Had sought the convent's holy pale.
But, filled with fear of sanctity,
He dared not boldly force an entrance
And violate the sanctuary.
Then for a moment was he fain
To give up his hell-dark device.
Absorbed in thought, he slowly paced
'Neath towering wall; shudder would rise
And run, scarce heard, in windless night
Through sleeping leaves at his approach.
Still hesitating to encroach,
He glancèd up: there was a glimmer
Of lamplight in Tamàra's window;
She seemed to wait for someone there. . . .
Then, through the drowsy, silent air,
There came a distant sound of singing,
With it chingàra's[35] strings a-ringing,
Subdued and gentle sounds, which flowed
In even streams, like tears of rare
Angelic tenderness: a song
For earth in Heaven born and nourished. . . .

Had, then, an angel flown in secret
To meet him as his friend of yore,
To sing the bygone joys they cherished,
And soothe the sufferings he bore?
Then first the Demon knew he loved;
Knew how he yearned and longed[26] for love.
In sudden fear, he thought to fly . . .
But in that first, heart-rending anguish
His wing was stayed—he had no power!
And, marvel! from his veilèd eye
There dropped a tear. . . . This very hour
There lieth by Tamàra's tower
A stone burnt through by flame-like tear—
Inhuman tear: a sign for aye! . . .

He entered, hopeful and elated,
His soul re-opened for the light,
And deeming that a new existence
Was now within his thirsting sight.
The trem'lous fears of expectation
And of the vague and mute unknown
Now filled his haughty soul: an omen
By evil wind and fortune blown. . . .
Within the sanctuary's walls
The first to meet his entrance there
Was Heaven's messenger, the Angel,
The guardian of the sinner fair.
His lofty brow with halo shining,
He stood, upon her sweetly smiling
And shielding[27] her with snow-white wing.
The rays of his celestial presence
Blinded the Demon's sight; in place
Of greeting sweet, reproach was hurled
With scorn in the intruder's face:

"Thou restless spirit of temptation,
Who called thee here? No veneration

Find'st thou in this untainted place;
Wrong here has ne'er[28] been arbitrary!
To my pure love, my sanctuary,
Do not attempt to lay thy trace!
Who summoned thee?"
The Demon's face
Lit up with smile of proud derision,
His look flashed jealousy and scorn,
And in his soul again awakened
The former hatred's poisonous thorn.
"Begone!" he stormed with dire incision:
"Leave her! She's mine! I say, she's mine!
In vain is thy belated vision,
We both reject thy right indign.
Upon her heart with pride[29] imbued
I now have laid my bond and seal:
It is no more thy sanctuary,
It is my realm of love and weal."
The Angel cast a look of pity
Upon the victim of the bane,
And, slowly, sadly, soaring upward,
Was lost to sight in heaven's plane.

* * * * * *

TAMÀRA.

"Oh, who art thou? Thy words bring terror.
Who sent thee—Hell or Paradise?
What wilt thou? Tell me!"

THE DEMON.

"Thou art lovely."

TAMÀRA.

"But who art thou? Who? . . . Answer me!

The Demon.

" I'm he whose voice has made thee listen
Throughout the midnight's calm and rest;
Whose thoughts have reached thee like a whisper,
Whose vision through thy dreams would glisten,
Whose sadness thou hast dimly guessed.
I'm he whose glance all hope doth wither
As soon as hope begins to bloom;
I'm he whom no one loves: all living
Malign and curse me for their doom.
Both space and time are naught to me;
I am the scourge my earth-serfs rending;
I am the lord of understanding
And freedom; I am Nature's foe,
The world's despair, and Heaven's woe.
Yet at thy feet I worship thee!
I bring to thee my gentle prayer
Of love, my awe and sacred fears;[30]
I come to thee in earthly torture—
My first humility of tears.
Oh, lend thy ear in mere compassion:
Thou couldst restore me to the good
By a single word! I gladly would,
Clad in thy holy love, appear
An angel new in radiance clear.
Oh, only list to me, I pray!
I love thee—I'm thy slave to-day!
The moment that I first beheld thee
A secret hatred rose within me
For my eternity and might.
I feel involuntary envy
For human poor and shallow glee:
Without it—life appears disdainful,
Away from thee—existence painful.
It frightens me! A sudden glow
Pervades my bloodless heart; below,

Deep in the old seared wound, the pain
Of sadness snake-like wakes again.
What is eternity without thee?
My boundless realm, when I am lonely?
Mere empty words, a godless fane:
Of futile beauty, vast but vain!

TAMÀRA.

"Oh, leave me, Spirit of Temptation![31]
Be silent, I will not believe!
Thou art my foe. . . . Alas! I cannot
Pray any more. A fatal poison
Has pierced my weak and doubting mind . . .
Thou art my peril. Sounding kind,
Thy words are fire and destruction. . . .
Oh, tell me—why thou lovest me?"

THE DEMON.

"Why do I, fair? I do not know.
Inflamed with spirit new, I proudly
Down from my guilty head now throw
The wreath of thorns. I fling my woe,
My past—to dust. My paradise,
My hell, henceforth are in thine eyes!
My passion is unknown to mortals,
Thou knowest not true passion springs:
Mine is engendered by immortal
Command[32] of ever-lasting things.
Since first the earthly world began,
In my mind's eye imprinted ever
Thine image seemed to fill the ether,
And through eternity it ran.
Thy name was sounding in my ears,
Confusing peace and contemplation.
In Paradise, the glorious years
Were lacking only thy creation!

Oh, if thou couldst but comprehend
The bitterness of my existence
Through dreary ages' dread consistence:
The pain—my thoughts never to share,
To have no praise for wicked dealing
Nor a reward for a kind feeling;
The boredom of oneself to bear,
Of this contention lasting ever,
Peace or a conquest bringing never;
Of e'er regretting, never wishing,
Of knowing, feeling, seeing all,
Of hating all against my will,
And of despising deeper still!
No sooner had the Lord Almighty
Pronounced the ban of my disgrace
And punishment, than all Creation
Had spurned me from her warm embrace.
In the blue vast each constellation
Resplendent in their bridal rays,
Which I had known since their first rising,
Now passed upon their dazzling ways
Their erstwhile friend not recognizing.
Alas! the partners of my dooming
I called upon in my distress,
But knew them not for faces glooming
With wrath and words of bitterness.
In panic then my wings unfolding,
I sped—but whither and for what?
All friends from Paradise withholding
Their pity for an exile's lot.
Like them, the world would know me not.

. . . . . .

Short space I spent these mortals ruling,
Whilst I with sin their souls imbued,
By scorn of noble goodness schooling.' . . .
Not worth my pain! Short time abiding,
I left the false, besotted throng;

In mountain glen and chasm hiding,
Lone meteor, without joy of wrong."[33]
. . . . . .
Oft through the rack and tempest raging,
I rushed at midnight levin-clad,
In fruitless hope of e'er assuaging
My aching heart's revolt and dread,[34]
To kill the pain of mind's regret,
The ne'er forgotten to forget!"
. . . . . .
. . . . . .

TAMÀRA.

" Why should I know thy woe and grievance?
Wherefore thy plaintive, bitter tone?
A sinner . . ."

THE DEMON.

" Was my sin against thee?"

TAMÀRA.

" They'll hear us. . . ."

THE DEMON.

" No. We are alone."

TAMÀRA.

" And God?"

THE DEMON.

" He will not glance upon us.
He is concernèd with the sky."

TAMÀRA.

" But Hell? But punishment and tortures? . . ."

THE DEMON.

" Well, what of them: thou wilt be mine!"

TAMÀRA.

" Whoe'er thou art, my friend so mystic,
I list to thee against my will.
I know my peace is lost for ever;
But thou art suffering, and never
I could forget thee suffering still.
But if thy words are false and cunning,
But if thou plannest a deceit . . .
Have mercy! What's to thee this conquest?
What counts my soul in thy conceit?
How could I be more worth to Heaven
Than those whom thou dost not befriend?
Many are fair! Like mine, their virgin
Bed is not creased with mortal's hand.
Oh, give thy oath, thy sacred vow:
Thou seest—I fail and suffer now—[35]
Thou seest a woman's tender dreams! . . .
But fear grows less. . . . To me it seems
Thou understand'st and knowest all . . .
And, surely, pity is my goal! . . .
Swear on thy oath, give me a token
That sin and wrong thou wilt renounce.
Or could it be that oaths are broken,
And promises are hollow sounds? . . ."

THE DEMON.

" I swear by dawn of the creation,
By the decay of earthly sooth,
By the disgrace of crime and evil,
And by the triumph of the Truth.
I swear by flashing hopes of conquest,
I swear by bitter pains of fall,
I swear by having met with thee,
And by the threat of losing all;
I swear by legions of the spirits,
And by the brethren of my woe,
By swords of passionless archangels,

My ever-waking callous foe;
I swear by Hell, I swear by Heaven,
I swear by sacredness, by thee,
Thy latest look my soul enslaving,
Thy first and guileless tear for me;
By breath from lips so pure and ireless,
Thy silky tresses' wave and shine,
I swear by suffering, elation,
And by my love for thee, divine:—
I now reject my former power,
Wholly renounce my thought and pride;
Henceforth no poisonous flattery's shower
Will e'er confuse the human mind.
I want to make my peace with Heaven;
I want to pray and to believe in
All Truth on earth, all Justice high!
Repenting tear will now efface
From brow, that's worthy thee, all trace
Of the celestial flame; in future
Let blissful ignorance bloom and reign
For ever with the human race!
Believe me that so far has no one
So understood and valued thee;
But here's my offer: all my power
I bring to thee, my sanctuary!
I seek thy love, I need its blessing;
Thou wilt obtain eternity
For one short moment. Trust my greatness
In love, and wrath, and equity.
I, free and wilful Son of Ether,
Shall take thee high above the stars,
And thou shalt be the Queen of Nature,
My foremost love, eternal treasure,
Whom nothing equals or debars! . . .

. . . . . .

A host of spirits in my service
I'll bring, obedient, to thy feet;

Crowds of ethereal fairy-maidens
Will wait, thy every wish to meet.
The crown which Evening Star is wearing
I'll tear from her, and crown thy head;
I'll take the dew from evening flowers
To shine on it in diamonds' stead;
I'll take a sunset ray of scarlet,
And gird thee with its ribbon light;
I'll saturate the air around thee
With purest fragrance of the night.
A never-dying magic music
Will charm thine ears by fall and swell.
I'll build a palace out of turquoise
And pearls and gold for thee to dwell;
I'll search for thee the depths of ocean;
I'll get all riches from the stars;
I'll give thee every earthly treasure—
But love me! . . ."
Closely o'er her bending,
He gently touched Tàmara's trembling
Lips with his lips burning like fire.
Words overwhelming with temptation
Were to her pleading his reply.
His powerful and flame-like gaze
Was burning her; the glowing blaze
Was close and thrilled, a mystic might:
Like sword relentless in its right.
The evil spirit was the victor.
But poison of his touch[36] inflicted
A fatal blow on childlike breast.
An agonizing shriek, through rest
And silence of the hour, broke:
With it there rang through cell and tower
Love, suffering, reproach for wrong,
And hopeless parting with the flower
Of life, so guileless and so young.

* * * * * *

The midnight watchman round the building
Was walking with his iron gong;
And, on his quiet tour, a yielding
Moan and harmonious sound of kiss
Perplexèd him. . . . He stopped. A throng
Of sinful doubts flew through his conscience.
Forgotten visions of his past
Rose in the old man's brain. He cast
A look of trouble up the cell wall . . .
But all was peace again, quiescence
Betraying only rustling leaves
And whisper of the brook that weaves
Itself into the mountain cleft.
Abruptly of his trust bereft,
The watchman hastenèd to make
The sign of holy cross—to send
Away the evil thoughts—and went,
Continuing his usual course
With hasty strides, in deep remorse.

* * * * * *

Like sleeping Peri,[37] calm and sweet
Tamàra in her coffin rested.
More white and pure than winding-sheet
Her pallid brow; and, unmolested,
For ever closed, her silky lashes;
But who would not be prone to say
That, under them, her look requested
But sunshine's touch or tender kiss
To wake again to earthly bliss?
In vain there glided rays of gold
Across them; idly, shy or bold,
Affection[38] planted its caresses:
Naught can withdraw the seal of cold
Where Death's eternity possesses!
And ne'er before Tamàra's dresses
Had been so rich and rainbow-bright,
Not even on a festal night;

Flowers from the glen[39] sent forth their fragrance
(So does the law of yore demand),
And by their crowns of vivid colour,
Clenched in her deadly grip, sent dolour
Of parting to the earthly light.
And nothing in her silent face
Bore any slight, nor heavy, trace
Of end that came in heat of passion:
Thrill, self-abandonment[40] were gone
From marble features. Cold dispassion
Reflected beauty great and lone:
Without a feeling, thought, or breath—
Mysterious beauty, like our Death.
. . . . . .
. . . . . .

The crowd of kin and friendly neighbours
Have started on their mournful route.
Beating his breast and madly tearing
His hair, Gudàl, exhausted, mute,
Mounts once again his white-maned steed.
. . . . . .
Three days, three nights of journey lead
To summit of a rock, where rest
His ancestors' remains: a daring
Idea of some presumptuous man
Who, in repentance' pious zest,
Has built a church where folk oppressed
Could lay their bones more close to Heaven.[41] . . .
As if death's dwelling could be warmer,
Or, far away from grievance former,
Would safer be the last repose. . . .
A useless care! Those who are dead
Dream nothing of the lives they led.

Up through the plane of azure ether
One of the holy angels flew;
Shielded with wings of golden hue,

He carried in his arms a sinner
From mortal world to Heaven's view.
With tender words of hope[42] he chased
Her pain and shame, her doubts and fears;
The traces of offence and suffering
He washed away with soothing tears.
Already sounds of Paradise
Were heard, when, spurting from abyss
And crossing them, the hellish spirit
Came up like wind with flashing hiss. . . .
He was as powerful as tempest,
Like lightning streaks he cut and shone,
Audacious and with pride relentless,
Repeated: "She is mine! Begone!"

Her terror with a prayer abating,
To guardian's breast, with tears vibrating,
Tamàra's sinful soul did cling.
Her fate had come to its decision:
The Demon's overwhelming vision
Was there again. But who could bring
To mind his former lucid semblance?
His wrathful gaze was full of vengeance,
Of poisonous enmity and wrath,
And mortal cold that blended both.

"Now vanish, ghost of gloom and darkness!"
The Heaven's messenger replied.
"Though thou wert conqueror for a time,
The hour of judgment is now come;
God's verdict doth annul her crime.
Her days of test and trial are over;
Together with her earthly[43] cover
The chains of sin fell off her brow.
We waited for her long ere now!
Her soul was one of those to whom
Life is one long and cruel torment;

On earth they never reach their bloom:
For God has given them heart-strings woven
On brightest ether's finest loom.
For them the earth was not created,
And they were never meant for earth;
To pay repentance she was fated—
The price for doubt and broken vow. . . .
She loved and suffered: for her sorrow.
Great Heaven's gates are opened now!"

Then at the Spirit of Temptation
An austere glance the Angel bent:
In Demon's sight the pinions golden
Soared up and with the azure blent.
The conquered Demon cursed his longings,
His maddening dreams where love had shone;
And once again he stood relentless,
In scornful arrogance, and dauntless,
Amidst the Universe—alone.

. . . . . .
. . . . . .
All is a wilderness. . . . No trace
Of former times about the ruins:
The hand of centuries took care
All sacred memories to efface
Of old Gudàl's illustrious doings,
And of Tamàra sweet and fair.
The little church up on the summit,
Where rest their bones 'neath earth and stone,
Amidst the clouds remains alone,
Safeguarded high by holy powers;
And by its gate stand granite sentries
On guard: snow-topped and clad in ice
As armour—ice that burns and glows[44]
With sunshine. The eternal snows,
Like falling water stopped and frozen,

Hang wearily and frowning over
The gaping chasms. The blizzard keeps
Its watch around the place, and sweeps
The dust from off the weathered walls,
And wails awhile, or goes the rounds.
The tales told of this church on high
Bring only clouds from out the East,
Who troop to it in pilgrimage.
No human beings mourn and cry
Over the tombs, or come to worship.
Kazbèk the Haughty, standing nigh,
Guards jealously his heritage,
And Man's unrest shall not efface
The quiet of their resting-place.

EXTRACTS FROM "THE SONG OF THE TZAR IVAN VASÌLYEVICH, OF THE YOUNG OPRÌCHNIK, AND OF THE BOLD MERCHANT KALÀSHNIKOV"

TRANSLATED BY E. L. VOYNICH

Now, all hail to thee, Tzar' Ivàn Vasîlyevich!
Of thee and of thine have we made our song,
Of the young oprìchnik thou dearly lovedst,
Of the merchant, the bold Kalàshnikov.
We fashioned it after the ancient way,
We sang it in tune to the dulcimer's sound,
We chanted it loudly that all men might hear.
And the orthodox folk took delight in our song;
The boyàrin Matvèy Romodànovsky
Brought to us foaming mead in a goblet,
And his young boyàrinya, fair of countenance,
Offered to us on a platter of silver
A new towel with silken embroideries.
Three days and three nights have they feasted us,
And hearkened, and are not weary of hearing.

. . . . . .

" Bright sun of my life, thou my master and lord,
Either slay me this night or hearken to me!
Keen are thy words as a two-edged knife
That cutteth the core of my heart in twain.
Little fear have I of the torments of death,
Neither fear I the cruel tongues of men;
But I fear, I fear thy anger, my lord.
Even now I came from the vespers home
In the twilight alone, through the lonely street;
And methought that I heard the snow rustle behind:
I looked back—'twas a man running swift as a wind.
Then I felt the legs beneath me fail,
And I covered my face with my silken veil.
Now he caught my hands with a grasp of might,
And softly he whispered thus in my ear:
'Fair woman, why tremblest thou? What shouldst thou fear?
No brigand am I, no thief of the night;
Nay, I serve the terrible Tzar' himself.
For my name, it is Kiribèyevich,
And I come from the glorious house of Malyûta.'

Oh, then did I count me for lost indeed,
And mine ears were filled as with roaring waters.
And then began he to kiss and embrace me. . . .
And he crushed me against him, and kissed me again.
Even now I can feel them searching my cheek,
Burning as burneth the fire of hell,
The accursed kisses he planted there!"

. . . . . .

Over great Moscow, golden-domed and mighty,
Over the marble Kremlin wall;
From beyond the far forest, beyond the blue hill;
Along the raftered house-roofs glimmering,
Chasing the pale clouds grayly shimmering,
Behold, ariseth now the fiery dawn.
Her yellow locks are flung across the heavens,
She bathes in scattered snowflakes glittering;

Even as a maiden gazing on her mirror,
She looketh laughing into God's clear sky.
Thou scarlet sunrise, why hast thou awakened?
For what delight art thou become so fair?

Now are they gathered together all,
All the young gallants of Moscow town,
By the river-side to the boxing-match,
Proud and glad for the holiday.
And the Tzar' himself is come hither in state;
With boyàre he come, with oprìchniki.
And before him stretcheth the silver chain,
And its links are clamped with the good red gold.

. . . . . .

Thus began to speak the orthodox Tzar':
" Answer me now on thy conscience in truth:
Of thy own intent, or against thy will,
Hast thou slain with death my faithful servant,
E'en the best of my braves, Kiribèyevich?"

. . . . . .

" Well is it for thee, liege-servant mine,
Bold fighter, thou son of a merchant's house,
That thou answeredst truth and verity.
Thine innocent wife and thine orphan-babes
Will I feed from my royal treasury;
To thy brothers I grant from this day forth
Powers of trading free from assessment,
Throughout all the breadth of my kingdom of Russia.
But for thee, go up, liege-servant mine,
To the place of fear, to the high place of doom,
And there lay thou down thy rebellious head.
I command that the axe shall be keen and fair,
And the headsman his garments of honour shall wear,
And the great bell shall toll for the peace of thy soul,
And all the burghers of Moscow shall know
That thou also art not shut out from my favour."

. . . . . .

Hey, bold singer, merry and free!
Dulcimers all in harmony!
Voices of golden minstrelsy!
Meetly end your singing now that meetly hath begun,
Giving honour, as is due, unto every one.

Now honour to the virtuous boyàrin!
And honour to the fair boyàrinya!
And honour to all faithful Christian folk!

DÙMA[45]

"A Thought"

⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑
⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ —

with the insertion of shorter lines, as in the original.

Sadly do I behold the present generation!
Either obscure or void its future seems to be;
Meanwhile, bowed down beneath knowledge and dubitation,
It will grow old in inactivity.
Scarce have we left our cradles, when not blameless
Our fathers seem; we note their wisdom slow-increased,
And life exhausts us like a road, even and aimless
Or sitting at another's feast.
To love or good most shamelessly a stranger,
In starting our careers we wilt without a fight,
Most vilely loosing heart before the face of danger,
Most despicable slaves when face to face with might.
So does a weakling fruit untimely ripe ere summer,
To taste and eye alike giving no joy at all,
Amongst the blossoms hang, a solitary comer,
And their most lovely hour is that which sees its fall.
With fruitless knowledge we our minds have desiccated,
And niggardly concealed from friends and kinsmen born
Our best hopes and the voice of passions elevated,
Which have by unbelief been laughed to scorn.

Scarce have we dared to taste the cup of life's effulgence,
But not thereby has youthful strength been left;
We, being so afraid of perilous indulgence,
Each pleasure of its essence have bereft.
Enthusiasm sweet through Poesy's revealing
And Art's creations ne'er can thrill us; we suppress
Jealously in our hearts the vestiges of feeling—
A useless treasure hid by worthless stinginess.
In hate and love alike our passion only faineth;
Nothing we sacrifice either to love or ire;
And deep within our soul some secret coldly reigneth
While in our blood is raging fire.
Rich orgies of our sires neither intrigue nor shame us;
Their thorough, childish vice tedious to us appears.
We press towards our grave, not happy and not famous,
And backward look with mocking jeers.
A grim crowd, soon forgot, we traverse the world's pages,
And pass thence without noise, leaving no trace, not one,
No single fruitful thought throwing into the ages,
Nor yet a work by genius begun.
And—strictest citizen and judge—shall future ages
With a disdainful verse degrade our dust[46] to naught,
With a deceivéd son's fierce mockery that rages
At his sire's ruin, gambling-wrought.

⏑ — ⏑ ⏑ — ⏑ ⏑ — ⏑ ⏑ — ⏑ ⏑ —
⏑ — ⏑ ⏑ — ⏑ ⏑ — ⏑
⏑ — ⏑ ⏑ — ⏑ ⏑ — ⏑ ⏑ — ⏑ ⏑ —
⏑ — ⏑ ⏑ — ⏑ ⏑ — ⏑ ⏑ — ⏑

There's no one with whom to shake hands at the hour of heart's pain;
All's solitude, dulness, and sadness.
Desires? What's the use of e'er wishing and longing in vain?
While years fly, the last years of youth with its gladness.

To love? But love whom? To love just for a time is
worth naught;
Eternity love cannot follow.
Look inward: all trace of the past with oblivion is fraught—
Both torments and joys, all is worthless and hollow.

What's passion? 'Tis sure, soon or late its sweet ailment
will fly,
When reason's assertion it heareth. . . .
And as one looks round with attentive and passionless eye,
A silly and meaningless joke life appeareth.

ELEGY

— ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑
— ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ —

Lone, along a roadway I am walking;
Through the mist it glimmers, stony shod.
Still the night. Now stars to stars are talking,
And the vast is listening to God.

In the skies are gorgeousness and wonder;
Earth is sleeping in the deep blue shine.
Why does anguish tear my heart asunder?
Does regret or longing make it pine?

Life for me holds no more expectation;
Nothing of the past do I regret.
I would wish for peace and liberation;
I would ask to sleep, and so forget.

Not the sleep the grave gives, cold, life-sobbing,
Would I wish to enter into—no;
But to feel my breast with life-force throbbing,
Feel it sweetly heave in breathing slow.

And I wish a voice, low and caressing,
Night and day would sing to me of love;
And an oak-tree, evergreen, its blessing
Rustle to me, bending from above.

THE ANGEL

⏑ — ⏑ ⏑ — ⏑ ⏑ — ⏑ ⏑ —
⏑ — ⏑ ⏑ — ⏑ ⏑ —

At midnight an angel was floating on high
And softly he sang through the sky.
The crescent, the stars and the clouds in a throng
All listened to his holy song.

He sang of the Spirits by sin undismayed
In the bliss of green Paradise shade.
God's greatness he sang, and the praise of his Lord
Rang true with deep heartfelt accord.

He carried a soul in his arms, to this life
Of tears and of sorrowful strife,
And the tune of that lay, although wordless, sank deep
For the soul through its lifetime to keep.

And here in this world, through the long, weary time,
It pined with a longing sublime,
And the dull songs of earth could not ever replace
The tunes of the Heavenly space.

FEÒDOR IVÀNOVICH T'ÙTCHEV

PANTHEIST AND IMPRESSIONIST

1803—1873

OUR modern poets regard T'ùtchev as their first real master. Pùshkin was too clear as compared to the aspirations of Russian literature of our day: the greatness of simplicity cannot be achieved consciously; L'èrmontov was also unique: one could not even try to write as he wrote unless one felt as he felt; while T'ùtchev was the first to "knock at the next door." . . . The modernists adore in him the first Russian poet of hints and allegories and momentary impressions and unanswered queries; these appeal to them who not only knock at the door of the Unknown—but I must say no more about them in the first volume of this book! Theirs will be the second.

T'ùtchev's chords of new poetry first resounded in the thirties. Jukòvski admiringly studied the first lot of his manuscripts, and Pùshkin, sharing his high opinion, was the first to publish some of the verses in his *Contemporary*. Nevertheless, T'ùtchev had no followers right up to the nineties. It is due to the research work of his main admirer, the well-known modern poet and critic Valèri Br'ùsov, that we are in possession of a biographical sketch and appreciation of T'ùtchev.

He was born (1803) in a characteristic home of our nobility of those days: a nest of devout orthodoxy (to the extent of having the holy books read aloud in his mother's bedroom—by a psalm-singer, I suppose—every day and the whole day long) side by side with French manners and French language everywhere outside religion. Comparing these details to the atmosphere of licentious aspirations which surrounded Pùshkin in his childhood, we have two varieties of home-life of the nobles, the products of the same Russian soil.

In the intensity of literary interest T'ùtchev's childhood was a very close second to Pùshkin's, although, again, minus the anacreonic *entrain* of the environments. From his early boyhood T'ùtchev had a tutor living at his parents' place in Moscow, a reader in Russian Literature at the "University Pension," a man of broad education, of a delightful poetic nature, and of boundless enthusiasm for art. Thanks to his friendship, T'ùtchev knew antique literature thoroughly in his early teens, and at the age of fourteen translated the first epistle of Horace to Mæcenas. The winter of that year he saw much of Jukòvski, who was spending it at the Kremlin with the Royal Family. The boy was in the poet's room when the bells of the historic temples announced the birth of Alexander II.; the impression of the moment on the boy's mind was so deep that he seemed to blend it for ever after with his monarchical principles.

Next year, at the age of fifteen, T'ùtchev entered the Moscow University, where he was immediately

elected member of the "Society of Russian Speech." The horizon of the youth's interests at that time can be judged from a record of a private talk, which had been kept by his guest, a literary personality: "T'ùtchev eagerly talked on Western and classical literature, on religion, on Moses, on Christ—His divinity and the literature on it—and the hardships which enlightenment suffers in Russia."

At the home of his parents T'ùtchev would invariably find a company of professors, scientists, and publicists, who all of them willingly held discussions with the interesting young man. But his poetry of that time was distinctly pseudo-classical, full of heavy pathos.

Without paying much attention to his University studies, T'ùtchev passed all his examinations brilliantly; everything came easy to that boy from his earliest childhood. He was a refined and admired person in the educated society of Moscow by the time he finished his course at the University (1822), and went to join the Civil Service in the Department of Foreign Affairs in St. Petersburg, as Pùshkin also did in his youth.

His enlightenment and personality very soon inspired his authorities with the idea of sending him to Germany as a member of the Russian Consulate in Munich. Thus began the second period of T'ùtchev's life: twenty-two years in Germany.

At first he felt home-sick, and reconciled to the environments only due to his дя́дька, a man-nurse,*

* See *The Russians and their Language*, p. 157.

who would not part with "the infant" (he had had him in his care since "the young gent" was four years old). That man turned their rooms in Munich into a Russian nook, with Russian ikons, Russian household, Russian food.

His leisure hours T'ùtchev devoted to translating (into Russian) Heine, Victor Hugo, Byron, and Shakespeare (my reader must have noticed by this time that nearly every one of the Russian poets has been translating Western poetry).

The social position, talent, and manners of the young diplomat soon opened for him all the doors of the best Munich society, which at that time was the centre of German intellectuality. When T'ùtchev came to Russia on his leave in 1825, he distinctly personified the supremacy of Western culture versus the Russian mixture of gifted spontaneity with aboriginal roughness. He was "a European" from top to toe: not only through the influence of foreign environments, but even by nature. The Russian размáхъ and разгýлъ were unknown to him;* he never longed to let himself go; his soul never "tore its ties." . . . Even the light, gentle waft of political free-thinking which he displayed when seventeen and eighteen was all gone by the time he returned from Munich for the first time. As a well-known Russian publicist put it, "there was the smell of the Court about him." The spirit in which he responded to the Decembrists' movement was not fiendish, but far from expressing esteem:

* See *The Russians and their Language*, pp. 71, 72.

" O victims of a mad illusion!
You must have trusted, in your dole,
That your blood's tenuous effusion
Would last to melt the northern pole.
It flashed a moment, hardly smoking,
On the eternal vast of ice.
Iron winter breathed upon it, cloaking
All traces of it in a trice."

Having returned to Munich, T'ùtchev married a brilliantly intellectual Bavarian lady older than himself, and their home became a centre of acknowledged refinement. At that time T'ùtchev and Heine became personal friends. It was also about that time that Prince Gagàrin, the Russian Ambassador, was greatly attracted by T'ùtchev's verse-writing, which the poet himself regarded only as his self-expression and private hobby, and which he never brought under the rays of publicity. But his chief insisted on sending a selection of his manuscripts to Russia, where, as mentioned before, they won the admiration of Jukòvski and Pùshkin, and appeared in the *Contemporary*, modestly signed " A Russian in Germany." At first the intellectual circles of the two capitals were greatly mystified, as the poems were distinctly individual and new, and the author's identity was presently disclosed.

Meanwhile T'ùtchev did something that was not in accordance with official regulations. His wife died; his grief was so great that he turned silver-grey. Oppressed, he suddenly left his duties behind, and went to the beautiful nooks of Nature in Sardinia and on the banks of Como. This arbitrary action necessitated his leaving his official post.

"All Petersburg" appeared to be on the banks of Como, in Turin, and wherever he went, and there was no lack of intellectual life. He also met again with Jukòvski, who was touring in Europe with his pupil, the heir to the throne. This time the elderly poet became completely attached to T'ùtchev, in whom he saw "a great genius and an extraordinary kindness"; it was quite a shock to the tender-hearted, romantic Jukòvski to see T'ùtchev very soon married again, to another brilliant woman, a German Baroness of striking beauty.

Now the poet, keenly responsive to political life, launched on writing political essays on the events and problems of the day. *Russia and Germany* appearing in Paris, unsigned, created a great sensation throughout Europe, and greatly pleased at the Russian Court. Wanting now to regain his official standing, T'ùtchev returned to St. Petersburg, and wrote *An Essay on Eastern Politics*, which he presented to the Tsar. At the same time we see him developing very pronounced Slavophil convictions. All this, combined with his interesting personality, did not fail to make him "the lion of society" (it was in the winter of 1844-45). He was the welcome and brilliant interpreter of Russia's policy, the wit, the fascinating talker. But the ray of his poetic gift was neglected by himself, and somewhat forgotten in the general shine of his halo. Practically speaking, he gave up writing poetry for several years, until the waves of 1848 moved his feelings to self-expression. Before that time, his "all-Slavonic"

ideals (the union of all Slavs) were distinctly reflected only in 1831, when, responding to the taking of Warsaw by the Russians, he called Poland "a kindred eagle pierced by brother's arrow, who fell into the all-cleansing bonfire," and added: "But trust the word of the Russian nation: thy ashes we shall guard in awe, and from them common liberation will rise like the Phœnix." . . .

How he regarded the European revolutionary spirit of 1848 will be clear from the poem *The Sea and the Cliff*. But he saw Russia's "cliff" threatened by "the sea" all the same, although he thought that the surges will die 'neath its heel. . . .

T'ùtchev saw the solution of many a problem in an all-Slavonic union, and urged the Slavonic nationalities to accomplish it. He addressed them by several very short but very powerful and sincere little poems. They are just a few lines each, but phrased and worded in such a way that putting them into English verse robs them of all their originality. I can only venture to give two of them in the nearest possible prose translation:

"Arise, Rus': thy hour is near! Arise for the sake of Christian worship! Is this not thy time to make the sign of the holy cross, and to send the bells ringing in Tsar'grad?"

And: "The longed-for harmony within the Slavonic Magnitude will be attained only when Poland will make peace with Russia: and this will happen, not in St. Petersburg and not in Moscow, but in Kiev and in Tsar'grad."

Perhaps some of my readers do not know that *Tsar'grad* (the city of the Tsars) stands with us for Constantinople, or Byzantium. This Russian-grown name is applied instead of the other two, both intentionally and unconsciously, both in print or speech, when Slavonic aspirations move the speaker. Our Prince Oleg in the ninth century is supposed to have very cleverly raided Byzantium, and to have "nailed his shield to its gate," which led to some desirable commercial treaties. The ancient princes of Kiev were greatly fascinated by the glitter of the Byzantine throne; and ever since, when a Russian thinks of that city in the same light, he cannot help calling it *Tsar'grad*. Therefore T'ùtchev would never for a second think of saying "Constantinople" or "Byzantium" in any of these characteristic little pan-Slavonic poems of his.

T'ùtchev believed in the ancient forecast that some day the capital of the all-Slavs' Tsardom will be Tsar'grad, and its sanctuary the St. Sophia temple in Bulgaria! . . . In reference to that ancient altar, T'ùtchev says:

> "Prostrate thyself before it, Tsar' of Russia,
> And rise—the all-Slavonic Tsar'!"

T'ùtchev was forty when he regained a high official position. Already a Kammerherr in rank, he was given the post of the head Censor (I hasten to say that he was quite tolerant, and tried to minimize the grip of censorship in Russia). This brilliant position in the Civil Service, in society, and that of a political writer, lasted till his end, and only one circumstance

temporarily blurred his halo. . . . We shall come to this presently. Meanwhile his all-Slavonic (oh, it is awful, that absence in English of the word увлечéніе!*) —his " being carried away by the idea " of all-Slavonic reunion was followed by the best period of his creative power, which lasted through the sixth and seventh decade of his life. He has not written much—only about 200 original poems, none of them long, and 100 translations—but his individual poetic bent developed quite clearly in those mature years.

The first edition of his only volume appeared in 1854, urged by his great admirer Turgèn'ev, and was a sweeping success. It is to that period, then, that Valèri Br'ùsov's appreciation mostly refers; and the best I can do for my English reader will be to retell in brief what this modern poet says:

" In metaphysics, which lies at the foundation of his poetry, T'ùtchev is a profound thinker who casts light on the world's mysteries from his own standpoint. To him Nature alone exists: man is only her dream, unless he is a naked, helpless earthly cereal, ' a pensive reed '; man's life and work are useless feats. Pantheism imbues nearly all of T'ùtchev's poetry. He adores Nature; to his mind,

> " She has a soul, possesses freedom,
> Possesses love, possesses speech."

It is always a confession of love when T'ùtchev speaks of Nature, and the clash between her and man makes the poet suffer:

* See *The Russians and their Language*, p. 124.

"Why, whence has come this fatal clash?
And why amongst the choir of Nature
Man's songs differ from songs of ocean?
And why complains the pensive reed?"

To T'ùtchev's mind, rivers and forests are nearer to immortality than man is: 'They alone have reached us from the other bank, but they will not answer even one single question! . . .' Man's passing into eternity he compares to the floes of ice as they fleet down the river into the sea: each floe melts away and is lost in the surrounding waters."

My own impression is that T'ùtchev did not know the ordinary mortal's ecstasy—when trees talk to you about your own joy, the moss whispers its understanding, the rivulets chuckle at your fun, the sea sings with you with full breath in exaltation, the clouds soothe you, the fog guards your cherished secrets, and the wind caresses you like a lover. . . .

No, all these living creatures do not seem to have been so simple and friendly to the deep thinker as they are to an ordinary lover of Creation. Even the poems *Thought after Thought* and *Tears of Humanity* do not express Oneness. The poet everlastingly longs to blend with Nature, but he does not express the feeling of having achieved this. Valèri Br'ùsov would not deny this, for he mentions only that longing of T'ùtchev, in many a quotation: . . .

"Let me taste annihilation!
Blend me with the dozing world!"

T'ùtchev is yearning "to drown his soul in the night-charms of the sea," and he calls out to man in general and to himself in particular:

" Of private life mere toy and victim,
Come, cast away false phantasy,
And dash, self-confident and joyous,
Into the life-creating sea !"

As Valèri Br'ùsov says, it is an eternal thirst to catch a glimpse of Nature's innermost self, to penetrate into cosmic mysteries. Hence the passion of this poet for night, thunderstorms, darkness, chaos; the cosmic problems, being insolvable, lure him on farther and farther, away from the clear day and sunshine towards those elements where, he thinks, Nature's true temple lurks. . . . It will not reveal its sanctuary to him, but he is sure that that sanctuary must be chaotic, and is therefore reflected in sin, evil, insanity, suicide:

" I love this wrath of God; I love this secret evil
Spreading invisibly in everything around."

When T'ùtchev was forty-seven years old, his third and real maiden-love came. It had all the passion of youth in it which was absent from his first and second union. But at that time his second wife was yet alive, and the poet's open self-abandonment in his adoration for a girl (she was the " class-dame " of his daughters at school) did not please the circles of " high-lifers," nor did the honestly open union fit in with the demands of the Court officialdom. Contemptuous attitude and persecution brought the loving young creature to exhaustion and death. Some of the best poems of T'ùtchev are direct reflections of this painfully happy and then unbearably hard period of his life. Two of them are translated below: *The Last Love* and *The Whole Day Long*.

After the death of the young girl, T'ùtchev was again welcome and popular everywhere. Some of his expressions have become classical. The four lines *Russia can ne'er be grasped by mind* are universally known, and are quoted even by those who cannot remember whence they came. And no wonder: they are a perfectly correct definition of Russia in a nutshell.

T'ùtchev remained "very much alive" literally to his last day; there was never an evening that he would not spend at some grand gathering, or with the literary circles, or with the younger generation of the Intelligentzia. His manner of debating on the points of friction was so interesting and intimate, so chivalrous and lovable, that he was the centre of society everywhere.

He paid his new-year's calls on the first day of 1873, at the age of seventy, and was brought home struck with apoplexy. But his mind died last; he continued dictating letters, and even verse, almost to his last moment.

With regard to versification, T'ùtchev first introduced new metaphors, epithets, and some fancy schemes of rhyme and metre. The metaphors were, of course, an outcome of the way in which things impressed him—namely, not by their essential qualities (as they impressed Pùshkin), but as they seemed to him at each given moment. Here are a few instances:

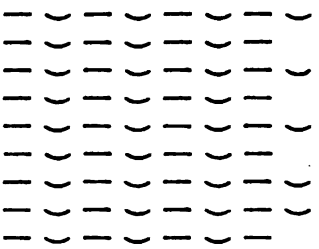
"The sky ran through my veins, an ether spray;" "the call of the morning ray;" "the stars lifted the

firmament with their heads;" " the living smells roaming in the darkling shadows;" " the sea singing to sleep man's dreams," etc.

In carrying out his fancy rhyming schemes he was perfect (*The Green Young Leaves*). But dealing with a fancy metre, T'ùtchev has not achieved faultlessly what, obviously, was his intent. In the three stanzas forming *Last Love* there are three syllables extra and two missing, which is a crime as compared to the absolute perfection of rhythm with Jukòvski, Pùshkin, L'èrmontov, and Al'exèy Tolstòy. I suspect the modern Russian poets, being inclined to go in for licence, find T'ùtchev's trespassing beautiful (at least, Valèri Br'ùsov points out the new rhythm of that poem without denoting its technical mistakes); but personally I rather think that T'ùtchev has not made these mistakes purposely, especially as he was introducing a new metre, but quite naïvely. In his days mistakes were not made on purpose; the new metre came to him spontaneously with the first stanza, but he was not able to master it throughout the little poem. (I did not think it necessary to convey the mistakes into English; my translation gives the rhythm correctly.)

There will be yet a great deal to say about the art of modern Russian versification. But so far we must part with that subject till the second volume of this work; in this book Fet alone will remind us of it again.

THE SEA AND THE CLIFF



Seething, splashing, all-defying,
Roaring, whistling, darting lights,
To attain[1] the stardom trying,
To insult the steadfast heights—
Is it Hell, Gehenna's foiling,
Tending all the world to drown,
Having laid the fire broiling,
Turning the deep[2] upside-down?

There the high sea, furious, railing,
With its surges in uproar,
Howling, screaming, shrieking, wailing,
Beats against the rocky shore.
But in haughtiest fixation,
Heeding not the surges rage,
In relentless conservation,
Thou, coeval with Creation,
Standest proudly, giant mage!

Furious in their mad offensive,
In their dire and fatal threat,
Onward launch the waves ascensive,
By mute Rock's derision met.

Crushed by him in loud collision,
Strength in onslaught vainly lost,
Backward splash the waves, a vision
Of a muddy froth, incision
And exhaustion at great cost.

Stand, O Cliff! Unmoved by raging,
Wait awhile: the futile zeal
Of the waves will soon cease waging
War upon thy mighty heel.
With their evil recreation
Wearied out at last, the sea
Will abate its agitation,
And, exhausted, in prostration
'Neath thy heel die quietly.

THE TWINS

⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑
⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ —

Twin-deities of earth-born creatures,
The magic Death and Sleep, there be.
Although akin in many features,
He is more grave, more tender she.

But there are other twins we know . . .
Naught is on earth more fascinating,
No charm so fearful, captivating,
As theirs: to them our hearts outflow.

Their union is not accidental,[3]
And only on some fatal days
Its secret, dark and sacramental,
Upon our hearts its network lays.

Who of us, flooded with sensation,
When blood's now chill, now in hot tide,
Has never thought of your temptation,
You twins—you, Love and Suicide!

⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑
⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ —

The midnight sky is so oppressive.
So overcast on every side;
'Tis not mere thoughtfulness or menace,
But dull and dreary sleep doth bide.

Only from time to time are flashes
Of lightning changing gloom to light:
Like demons deaf and dumb, who, talking
Among themselves, their words thus write.

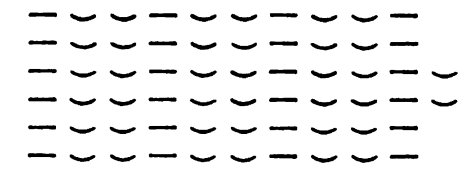
As if arranged by common signal,
Part of the firmament shows clear,
'Merging distinctly for a moment
Fields and the forests in their rear.

Then all things sink again in darkness,
Lurk in the lightly sleeping[4] night,
As there had been some secret matter
Decided in some hidden height.

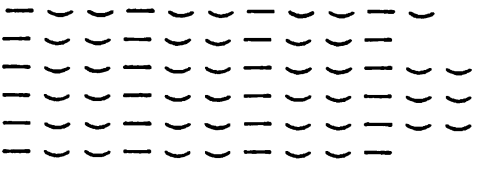
⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ —
⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑

Nature pays no attention[5] to the Past,
Our phantom years are strange to her existence;
And, facing her, we realize that we
Are but her dreams,[6] just flickering in the distance.

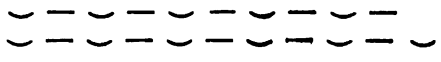
And, one by one, all of us here alike
Who strain to do some feat of fame illusive,
She welcomes equally in her appeasing chasm—
Chasm all-absorbing, all-effusive.



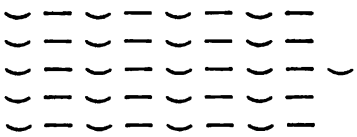
THOUGHT[7] follows thought as a surge follows surge.
From the same source two expressions emerge;
Heart-born, or sea-born, in infinite vastness,[8]
There in the freedom, or here in the ghastness:
Forwards and backwards[9] they leap to the verge—
Phantoms that ever our restlessness urge.



TEARS of humanity! tears of humanity!—
Flowing at sunset and flowing at morn,
Flowing unknown to us, flowing unseen to us,
Tears inexhaustible, numberless, piteous—
Flowing as flow through the course of eternity
Streams of dense[10] autumn at midnight forlorn.



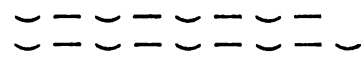
NATURE'S a Sphinx. And so to ruin man
She by her art is all the more empowered,
Since, it may be, she's with no riddle dowered,
And never has been since the world began.



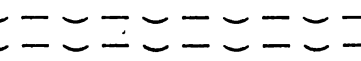
The green young leaves all glossy gleam.[11]
See how the woods to life awoke!
With green bedewed the birches thicken;
Lace-like amid the hills they stream,
Airy, like half-transparent smoke.

Through the long winter did they dream
Of spring, and still of spring they spoke,
And summer's gold. Now their dreams quicken
And spring to life at the first stroke
Of the blue heaven's flashing beam.

Oh, beauty of those newborn leaves
Washed in the laughing rays of sun,
And shadows by them just begotten!
The dead, they whisper, are forgotten;
And mid their legions[12] there's not one
Dead leaf. Life only throbs and heaves.



Russia can ne'er be grasped by mind,
Nor to a common rule adjusted:
Her line is of a special kind—
Russia is only to be trusted.



The whole day long fainting and still she lay,
And there seemed shadows all around her, ready . . .
The warm and heavy shower that summer day
Ran down the leaves gurgling and rustling steady.

And slowly, slowly she came to. The noise
Attracted her, and deep in cogitation
She listened long, profoundly, in the poise
Of consciousness, with tense self-concentration.

As though she spoke them to herself alone,
These words, distinctly uttered, she let fall then
(I stood close by—alive, yet turned to stone):
" Did I indeed not love at all, then ? . . ."

Oh, didst thou not ? Such love as thou didst give
In no one, no one, ever yet has woken !
O God ! . . . And I left here, alone, to live ?
Has this poor heart not yet in pieces broken ? . . .

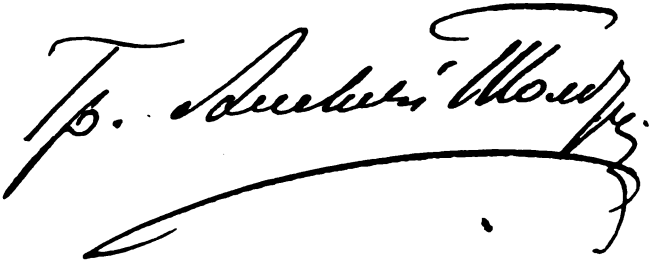
LAST LOVE

⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ —
⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ | ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑

Oh, how the walking down our slope
Makes love more tender, more superstitious !
Oh, shine, oh, shine, the parting hope
Of love, the last love, light unambitious !

Half of the sky is overcast
With gloom, and only the west is glowing.
Oh, linger, evening glimmer ! last !
Remain here longer, thy charms bestowing !

Though in the veins the blood grows scarce,
The heart in tenderness is not failing.
O thou, Last Love ! Life's parting grace !
Supreme elation, hope unavailing ! . . .



COUNT AL'EXÈY TOLSTÒY

LYRIST, AND BARD OF OLD RUSSIA

1817—1875

THE figure of the poet Count Al'exèy Konstantìnovich Tolstòy stands out clearly outlined in its individual light. An interesting figure, essentially Russian, but unique in its own crystallization.

The family of the Counts Tolstyie * traces its roots to the thirteenth century. The title was granted to it five centuries later. It is a very large family, and the poet was not closely related to the great prose-writer.

Al'exèy Tolstòy's personality—in his convictions, tastes, and poetry—makes one think that a truly aristocratic nature must reflect the most outstanding national features of the folk-heroes. Al'exèy Tolstòy could very well be a Russian *bogatỳr'*† himself: a man richly endowed with splendid physique and a happy, genial disposition enveloped in the warm rays of humour. This poet's physical strength was such

* In plural; *tolstóy* being an adjective; it slightly differs from its modern form, tòlstyi (which means big, stout) in nominative, but preserves the ordinary adjectival terminations in declension.

† See *The Russians and their Language*, pp. 110, 177.

that he used to twist fork-spikes into screws, and to unbend horseshoes—a favourite Russian test of strength. Next, he passionately loved the wild beauties of the Russian land—the steppes, the endless "dreaming forests" (a usual Russian expression), the voices of the wild beasts and birds of prey. And blending with this passion there was his enthusiastic instinct of a hunter; he gave to that sport all his free time after the age of twenty, and acquired a name of a good bear-hunter—another picturesque Russian feature.

As if to crown these characteristics of crystal-like firmness, there was an additional circumstance with regard to his private life; he was known as "almost a one-lover." This "almost," in the mouth of a prominent literary authority when writing a biography of the poet, is in itself Russian to the core. There is no tendency amongst the Russans to pretend that everyone loves only once in his or her life; and the expression "one-lover," однолю́бъ, stands with us for those men whose individual temperament accounts for their having only one love in their lifetime. Allowing the biographer this frank Russian "almost" in his picture of the poet, we nevertheless have before us a figure of a stately gallant *bogatyr'*, possessing a clear-cut, resourceful, quietly jovial nature, one that knows no torments of spiritual duality—wherein this poet is akin to Pùshkin. But Al'exèy Tolstòy maintains his oneness even in the sphere of love, that most difficult test given to humanity; his devotion to his wife (who had nursed him,

fever-stricken, at the time of the Crimean campaign) was most beautiful, according to the statements of many of his friends and contemporaries.

Al'exèy Tolstòy's poetic talent was, consequently, a crowning bloom—a bloom of that golden hue which alone could be the product of a gallant personality like his. It breathed of ancient Russia, in which his ideals dwelt. This passion for the aboriginal character of Russia, expressed in an exuberant way in his ballads and parables, was the right kind of passion—namely, not for the Moscow period of Russian history, but for the pre-Moscow Russia. The Moscow autocracy, which was brought to its culminating-point by Ivàn the Terrible, was the result of the Tartar possession of, and influence on, Russia, which lasted for a few centuries; having gradually overthrown the invaders, the Russian Princes only copied their pompous brilliancy of Court life and their ways of ruling. But before the fatal invasions Russia of the South, the Kiev Russia of the tenth and eleventh centuries, presented a very promising State organization: the Vètché was an assembly of the people in each district, rich and poor, old and young, man and woman; its functions being judicial, administrative, and political; while the business of the Princes (originally hired from amongst the wandering Northmen) was mainly the defence of the land, the warfare carried out with the help of their warriors' Friendhoods.* In peace-

* This view was disputed by Professor Miller (in the eighteenth century) and his followers, who insisted on their idea that Russia had been absorbed by the Northmen altogether.

time these ancient Princes of Russia were in close intercourse with the population. Particularly popular for his buoyant gallantry, good humour, and hospitality, was Vladìmir the Red Sun (a term of endearment), best known for having "introduced Christianity" into Russia. This reform was a most drastic one, carried out with genial simplicity: his Friendhoods of warriors were commanded to go everywhere and to see that the population of the land should be assembled in each district, driven into the rivers, and baptized by the Byzantine priests accompanying the warriors! In spite of such a manner of introducing a new religion (988), Vladìmir the Red Sun was certainly a bright personality who suited the unsophisticated Russians of his time very well. Prince Yaroslàv the Wise, his son, was a distinctly gifted statesman, in whose days Russia's trade with various foreign lands and her initial enlightenment were quite notable, and, combined with the wise and free self-organization, were potent with great possibilities. There is no doubt that, if the various nomadic tribes from the East followed by the Tartar hordes had not nipped all the development in the bud, Russia might have been by this time a wonderful country. . . .

I would not have allowed myself to remind my English reader of these details of ancient Russian history if they had nothing to do with Al'exèy Tolstòy's poetry, and through it with his exceptional position in the literary circles of his time; but these points are all connected, so I must permit myself some more preliminary explanation.

The nineteenth-century wave of emancipation burst forth in Russia in the sixties; the ever-eager Russians leapt at the new ideals with superfluous elasticity, "overdoing it," and then, by necessity, fell back a certain stretch of their "long jump" to a more steady and more logical attitude. When the emancipation of serfs was closely preceded and closely followed by the all-sweeping Liberalism of the educated classes, there were a good many extreme "leaps"; these resulted in the appearance of Turgèn'ev's Bazàrov (in his "Fathers and Sons"), and in this author's expression "nihilist," which was too readily, too lavishly, and too carelessly applied by the West to all our unselfish workers of the great movement.

Naturally enough, the element of the ancient stateliness and grace was absent from the outer features of the new type of these active social workers. This element was still further from them than it was from the brutal but gorgeous atmosphere of the Moscow period; and Al'exèy Tolstòy, a whole-hearted admirer of the genuine and genial stateliness of the original Russia—the Kiev Russia—was naturally provoked and displeased by the drastic novelties. Being a "singer carrying Beauty's banner" *par excellence*, he could not bear the young girls of society studying practical anatomy, or cutting their plaits off and wearing eyeglasses not through weak eyesight, but "on principle," which in those days was innocently, though ridiculously, considered a sign of advanced ideas.

Nor could he, the singer of the strict ancient Vètché

system, approve of the occasional mistakes of the then newly introduced jury court, which, carried away by the socialistic and humanitarian ideas of that time, was apt to be excessively lenient in its verdicts.

Good-nature and a sense of humour did not fail the poet; the series of ballads, songs, and parables, that came from his pen ridiculing the new extremes of the educated Russia throbbed with acute wit and infectious laughter.

For instance, one of them gives a picture of two happy, dainty old-style lovers enjoying a walk through the fields and flower-gardens, when it appears that all the flowers will be presently replaced by turnips, the nightingales by fat turkeys, and the copse will be opened to herds of swine. . . . The girl gets indignant, but her lover tells her that such are the new ideas of the progressists, as beauty has become obsolete nonsense; by spoiling everyone's property, explains he, universal welfare is meant to be attained. "But isn't there room enough in the asylums for these people?" asks the graceful maiden clad in silvery tissues. It appears that no asylum would hold them; and the young fellow with the pearl-embroidered cap and the rest of it, can think only of one measure—namely, "To hang the cross of St. Stanislav on the neck of all the ringleaders, as this will comfort them at once and make all things run smoothly again" (this cross being the first decoration for the Russian *chinòvniki*—officials in the Civil Service). "But this is a mean measure!" exclaims the maiden-idealist. "But this is a sure measure," tells

the practical young fellow, and they part vexed with each other. The ballad ends with the author's jest that he, being whole-heartedly carried away by the new doctrines, offers it as his contribution to the "Russian Commune."

Another ballad of this kind, a great favourite, written in a richly flowing anapest, tells of a young fellow *Potòk-bogatyr'* ("Potòk" meaning stream or current, an allegorical name for the hero) at the Court of Vladìmir the Red Sun, in the tenth century, who dances himself into falling asleep on the spot for five hundred years. . . . Just a few stanzas from the beginning of this colour-bright ballad may partly lead my reader into its atmosphere—"partly" because a lot of Old Russian poetic terms and twists remain untranslatable,* which necessitates some stopgaps, and even a few extra syllables (!) leading into the lines.

"Prince Vladìmir the Red Sun on feasting is bound,
Merry-making in full swing proceeding:
With young women the men sing and dance in a round
To the cymbals' and dulcimers' ringing.
Stately women like stars in their beauty do shine,
While to stamping of boots and to melodies fine
Stately fellows are dancing and sliding,
Their figures now swaying, now gliding.

"But surpassing them all shines the gallant Potòk:
Casts a glance—'tis a bright sparkling shower;
Turns one way—'tis the king-eagle perched on a rock;
Turns th' other—a falcon's proud power.

* Пирова́нье - лико́ванье, молоди́цы, ладъ, на - ди́во, обме́четъ, си́зый, диви́тся, стро́йная стать, въ по́ясъ, подбоча́ся, ка́жетъ, сѣнь, дивя́ся, богаты́рская, мости́цы. These are from the six translated stanzas only.

To and fro gliding swiftly in lilt and in swing,
Sudden stamping, or waving his cap to the ring,
His black curls tossing, gaily approving,
His broad shoulders expressively moving.

" Prince Vladîmir delights in the boy's flashing eye,
His fine form and his movements amazing:
' There's no one in Rus' who could possibly vie
With Potôk: he of all deserves praising !' [cess;
But the nightfall draws on. Rise the Prince and Prin-
Bowing low to their guests on all sides, they express
Their desire that all folk should rest pleased:
Which means—time to go home; feast has ceased.

" Bowing, too, with their thanks guests disperse thereupon;
Prince conveys his Princess to their chamber;
But Potôk, he alone now remains dancing on—
His surroundings he does not remember !
Stamping roguishly, like one possessed by a spell,
He sees not that the hall now is empty and dull;
Deaf to th' hint of Vladîmir-the-clever—
Dances fast, even faster than ever !

" And already the moon shows her silvery horn,
Bluish mist fills the water-course hollows;
Wicked Bàba-Yagà in her mortar is borne,
And Rusàlki splash white in the shallows;
On the Dnieper bank Forest-fiend howls, dreary sound,
Household-ghost, guarding horses, is out on his round;
On the chimneys the witches are prancing—
But Potôk goes on merrily dancing !*

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* My reader will recognize in this stanza the folk's conceptions mentioned in Pùshkin's *Prologue* (see Notes and Explanations referring to it). The rhyming of the last two lines has made it impossible to work in one of the witches' manners: they " wave their sheets " standing on the chimneys !—the purpose of which, I presume, is clear to them only. By the way, we have two words for " dancing " in Russian: the modern one comes from the same Latin root, танцова́ть; but the national old one (applied here, of course) is пляса́ть.

" Through the Byzantine windows the starry host peeps,
And each star stops amazed, watching keenly
How Potòk's mighty shadow, his hands on his hips,
On the whitewashed wall still moves, serenely.
Just at dawn was Potòk overcome by his dance;
His legs failed—all at once he fell down in a trance
On the boards of the palace floor neatly:
Gone to sleep for five hundred years sweetly."

He wakes up in Moscow, and sees a procession of a Tsar', proceeding " to hang or to cut someone." To his utter astonishment, he sees the crowds falling on their " knees and their bellies " before the tyrant. His natural request to be shown the way to the old *vètché* makes people run away from him as from an evil apparition. He also encounters a torrent of most decisive and graphic scolding from a young lady into whose garden he has stepped over the fence to smell a fine rose bloom. All this makes him think that he has awakened too early, so he falls to the ground again and goes to sleep for another three hundred years. Next time he awakes, obviously, in St. Petersburg, and sees the final metamorphoses with the young girls, with the public trials (watching an enthusiastic reception given to a pardoned criminal), and with the public gatherings. At one of these he is astounded by the statement of one " betwen-betwixt a chemist and a patriot" that "God is only a kind of oxygen," and that Russia's salvation rests with the limitless freedom (безначáлье, insubordination) of the darkest masses of the people. When Potòk ventures to debate, saying that he thought he, too, was " people," and that he had the right either to respect the *mujìk* or not, depending

on what kind of a *mujìk* he was, they hiss him out of the modern assembly, making him wonder at their passion for blindly adoring someone: if not a *khan*, then a peasant. A row of girls in another roomy building, with their sleeves tucked up, and "cutting to pieces a dead body," does for the Kiev gallant! He says that "even the witches on the Bald Hill in Kiev, though naked and barefooted, used to keep their long tresses of hair!" So he thinks he had better go to sleep once more. The author winds the story up by saying that he could not continue his song, as it would be mere guesswork; but he drops just a hint that *Potòk bogatyr'* may, perhaps, wake up next time in—Tsar'grad!

One can be sure that Al'exèy Tolstòy's humour would not let him become didactic even if he had described Potòk's next awakening; nevertheless, the extreme progressists of the sixties found all his works of this style "reactionary," while the conservative Slavophils found him not Russian enough —because he would not glorify Old Russia indiscriminately.

Thus the aristocrat-poet (even a courtier and a personal favourite of Alexander II., whose companion he had been since their early boyhood, when they played their games together every Sunday in the Winter Palace) found himself in an isolated position. His voluntary and mutually arranged retirement from the Court and from his proximity to his sincerely loved Sovereign cost Al'exèy Tolstòy many a sad day. But his refined nature would not allow

him to remain a courtier first and foremost when he longed to be "only an artist." Nor had he any inclination in him for vigorous struggling, or for dwelling on sad and bitter subjects. He was "one of the few Russian poets who wrote in a major key," as he rightly said about himself. There is no melancholy to be found even in his purely lyric poetry—only a touch of dainty pensive sadness at times (as in *No Word from You*).

That he actually wanted to be "only an artist," without longing even for popularity or fame, can also be seen from the fact that he was thirty-seven years old when he first began sending his poems to the Press, while he was only six when he first began "soiling paper with his verses"!

Jukòvski, the old poet, knew and loved him as a small boy; it was he who introduced Al'exèy Tolstòy to the Court as a companion for his pupil Alexander II. When travelling abroad, Al'exèy Tolstòy's mother visited Goethe, and the seven-year-old boy sat in the lap of the great old poet, a fact which he remembered ever after. Amongst his friends were Gògol' and N'ekràsov, and many others from the literary world. These circumstances helped to uphold his creative spirit in general; but it certainly was his original self which kept his lyre ringing in its individual key.

His purely lyric creations are equally undiluted, free from any admixture of metaphysics. The finest of the long lyrics is the poem *John of Damascus*. A number of his short lyrics have inspired the best Russian composers, particularly Chaykòvski, whose

lyric genius corresponds beautifully to Al'exèy Tolstòy's; they blend together entirely. The two purely lyric short poems of Al'exèy Tolstòy given below are amongst the most beloved of Chaykòvski's "romances," as we call this style of songs (they are not necessarily "love-songs").

The poem *It was in Early-Early Spring* has an atmosphere of transparency about it, just like the silver birch woods have themselves.* . . . Chaykòvski's music for it breathes of that same transparent air, electrified by the pure freshness of ozone, which comes with the thaw of snow and the first green blades of grass. . . . As a lyrist, Al'exèy Tolstòy is tender and daintily dreamy, sometimes daintily humorous, but always quite apart from his Old Russian aspirations.

A link between Al'exèy Tolstòy the lyrist and Al'exèy Tolstòy the nationalist stands his greatest creation, the *Dramatic Trilogy;* it consists of three historical dramas written in exquisite blank-verse, and depicting the three successive reigns of the end of the sixteenth century: *Ivan the Terrible, Tsar' Feòdor Joànnovich,* and *Boris Godunòv.* The first of these dramas came in its time as a revelation in the Russian dramatic literature—a hereditary Moscow Tsar' being for the first time treated exclusively from the psychological point of view, realistic and generally human (may I remind the reader that the

* The silver birch is the national Russian tree. We have no "day" of silver birch, but it is loved both in poetry and real life.

hero of Pùshkin's drama, Borìs Godunòv, was *not born* to be a Tsar' ?).

The central play of the *Trilogy* is the best of them all, a real fine pearl, the *chef d'œuvre* of Al'exèy Tolstòy's art as a psychologist, a poet, and a historian. The gently beautiful nature of the young Tsar' Feòdor was somewhat akin to the poet's; even Feòdor's deep devotion for his lovable, saintly, Old Russian type of a wife must have made such a beautiful feature of the play due to Tolstòy's similar experience in his own life. He created in Feòdor a living figure which will never die in our literature. But it is so exclusively Russian in its exquisite deep tenderness, pathetically interrupted at times with fits of passionate temper of an omnipotent Moscow Tsar'—and a son of Ivan the Terrible to boot!—that it is doomed to remain absolutely misunderstood and unappreciated by the public of the West, especially by the British. Here I clash in opinion with our Russian literary authorities: they say that Feòdor's personality interpreted by Al'exèy Tolstòy is of generally human interest and of world-wide literary value, being so truly and so deeply psychological. . . . But my own experience in our two countries leads me to a different conclusion. The closer a translation of the drama *Tsar' Feòdor* might be, the more . . . comical the beloved, pathetic character of the poor young Tsar' would appear to the English! . . . I once took a prominent English writer, our guest in St. Petersburg in 1898, to the theatre to see *Tsar' Feòdor*. The play, then

first freed from the censor's grip, was having a victorious run, unheard of before or since, being most exquisitely acted by true artists who entirely identified themselves with Feòdor and his Tsaritza Irìna. Well, the more lovable and deeply tragic was the young Tsar' at the moments of his undeserved hardships, the more heartily our English guest chuckled with laughter! . . . He was quite amused both by Feòdor's great tragedy and by the unanimous devotion of our public to him. "The London public would roar with laughter," he said: "he is very funny, that poor fellow!"—We Russians feel sorry for the nice man in his position of a Tsar'.

Taking it for granted that our guest knew the psychology of his compatriots, I venture to oppose my opinion to that of our Russian literary authorities: I would dread seeing this play "translated" and acted in England, whether by Russian or by English artists! . . .

London saw the personality of Borìs Godunòv at Drury Lane (1914) in the opera reproduced by genuine Russian artists. But this play is quite a different thing: the gifted, energetic, clever nature of the only Russian Tsar' who *made* all parties join in order to elect him—an outsider of Tartar descent, a self-made man, an ordinary mortal—would certainly please the English taste. Besides, Borìs is always punished by all his poet-biographers for his egotism—so that's also all right! He certainly commands deep interest, and his tragedy will not call forth a jest even from a Cockney in the gallery. But Borìs has not an atom

in common with Feòdor. And we shouldn't be Russians if our hearts did not go out to the lovable, open-hearted, impulsive Feòdor, who is not at all a nonentity, and not a mere funny weakling.

By this time it should be clear to my reader that Al'exèy Tolstòy is a perfect master in the Old Russian style of speech; therefore my translations of his typical calls of the Old Russian spirit could not possibly satisfy my own or any other Russian ear! The whimsical parable *Hail to thee, Father Sovereign* created a great sensation at the time of its appearance: it represents allegorically old Mother Russia watching Peter the Great at his work of "cooking porridge" for "the children"—*i.e.*, introducing the Western civilization to Russia. . . . There is hardly any need to point out to my reader on this occasion how utterly different was the attitude of Al'exèy Tolstòy towards Peter the Great as compared to the admiration which always inspired Pùshkin!

Those of Al'exèy Tolstòy's works that have been published only abroad are still more untranslatable than Pùshkin's prohibited poems and epigrams; they are all of them long, and are uninterpretable for more than one reason. The subject of one of them (*Rebellion in Vatican*) is undeniably "improper"; but the idea is absolutely just. It is the preposterous, greatest wrong as an established institution which Al'exèy Tolstòy attacks with his cutting weapon: not the dull weapon of moralizing, but the one of unsurpassable, free wit, with sparkling dots on all the *i*'s. This unique story is written in four-feet trochee,

the four short lines of every stanza grouped together by the same double rhyme.

The *History of Russia* is not improper at all, but irresistibly irreverent! It begins with the famous legend about the Old Slavs asking the Northmen "from over the sea" to come and rule over them, "because Russia is large and prolific, but of order there is none in it!" The "history" faithfully describes era after era; but each ends with the statement, "yet order would not come." . . . It was only Ivan the Terrible, says the story, that all but managed to introduce order: "because he was a solid, a serious old man!" These chronicles do not touch upon the last few reigns, of course. I am glad to say that their wit and art have at last overbalanced the fear of its "revolutionary influence," and the whole long poem, dropping its little stanzas like pearls of laughter, has now been published in Russia for some twenty years; so has the satire *The Dream of the State Councillor Popov.*

But what would be absolutely "impossible" in England is the long story of *How Tsar' Ahreyàn went complaining to God.* The remarkable feature of this satire is, that what is supposed to be its "revolutionizing element" in Russia, and what would be regarded as an appalling blasphemy in England, is a wonderfully true reflection of the most religious, devout, nationally pious spirit of our unsophisticated masses! The phantastic story is about a tsar' Ahreyàn who "could not help being stupid" (=недоу́мочекъ, a most sympathetically condescend-

ing epithet). His lover was the "thrice-cursed, squinting (=разноглáзая=different-eyed) Falsehood;" and the point of the story is that this personage sent him to heaven, to complain to God, because Truth has dared to revolt in his land, rising hand-in-hand with all the righteous people, in defence of the "rolling-over-nakeddom" (=голь перекáтная, a poetically pathetic national epithet for the world of the destitute: those "naked" to such an extent, as it were, that "it"—nakeddom, голь, being a collective noun—could roll over and over again without catching at anything. . . . The adjective перекáтная is akin to the name of a small plant, перекати-пóле, which grows in the steppes, holding on with a wee little root: the autumn winds tear it out and send it rolling along the smooth flat grass for scores of miles. . . . All this might suggest the idea of the "proletariat," which is correct in itself; but Al'exèy Tolstòy would never dream of using a latinism where he was revelling in the national speech). The whole tale is told from the point of view of our simple-minded, naïvely religious, but strictly just peasantry; as a piece of art it is so well balanced, written with such a knowledge of the peasant's mind, that the nicest *mujìk* would never for a moment think it blasphemous or take it for mockery, but would accept the whole tale for genuine coin—*i.e.*, for a thing which would be *just like this* if it did happen. It reflects the aboriginally human, phantastically simple, touching religion of the peasant's heart, however heathen its imaginative element is bound to appear to a more

cultivated religious mind. The picture of the heaven is "the limit"! . . . And yet every educated Russian feels that it is just the one that is likely to dwell in a Russian peasant's mind! . . .

Tsar' Ahreyàn is taken round the kingdom of heaven by St. Nicholas (Никóла-угóдничекъ, an expression of endearment for that best-beloved of all saints, the best of old fellows, kind, yet very just). He *does not know* the cause or aim of the tsar's pilgrimage, and, good-naturedly, does not trouble to inquire about it; he just rescued tsar' Ahreyàn, on passing by, from the Apostle Peter, who would not let him in without a passport. . . . Nikòla (St. Nicholas) explains to the man that Trinity is split in three, and the kingdom of heaven is split into three equal parts. But I have started on details, while, to do them justice, it would be necessary to give every line and every one of those lovable, essentially Russian expressions and twists of speech in which the whole long poem is written. It *is* a masterpiece (each line built of three feet of anapest, the last of them being blended with the winding-up dactyl: ⏑ ⏑ — ⏑ ⏑ — ⏑ ⏑ — ⏑ ⏑ Occasionally the last syllable gets the logical beat falling on it. It is not rhymed). I must just mention that God the Father is depicted in most poetic national expressions of endearment as having retired from His work and resting on the fluffy white clouds in the rays of the "dear red sun." . . . But He gets furious with tsar' Ahreyàn and with the "fat-bellied priests" (попы́ толстопу́зые), even before

the plaintiff's cause is laid before him; so Nicholas pokes him in the ribs and takes him farther along "whilst all is sound and well." They find Christ in the beautiful light of a heavenly feasting, to which He welcomes with His embrace every righteous man coming from earth (where a war between Mother Truth and the Squinting Falsehood is raging). Ahreyàn displeases Christ with one of his very first statements, and the old fellow Nicholas saves him in the nick of time again. They meet the Virgin "shedding burning tears, because her darling the sweet pigeon Holy Ghost has flown down to earth to help Truth in her warfare; but the Squinting Falsehood, the lover of Tsar' Ahreyàn, is sure to encage him and to gobble him up!" . . . Then only the truth dawns upon St. Nicholas—and his temporary protégé's pilgrimage ends with a complete fiasco in a perfectly simple manner: "'Ah! That is what thou art?' said St. Nicholas in a righteous temper. He spit at the tsar's beard once, he spit at the tsar's beard twice, he spit at the tsar's beard thrice—and went away."

After this grandiloquent brevity one does not even care to know what befell tsar' Ahreyàn after that! The judgment of the simple Russian mind is reflected in it completely. And the poet's sense of proportion winds up the whole ballad by a chord of elation, equally rooted in the artistic folk's spirit:

"Takes a long time, my comrades, a deed to do;
Takes a long time, my comrades, our tale to tell:
This is not yet the end of our tale, my boys.
And the day when our tale will be finished—Glory!
Thereupon we'll begin quite another song—Glory!

Song of jollity, happiness, liberty—Glory!
Ghost eternal, the Spirit of Righteousness—Glory!
To our mother and pleader, God's Truth and Light—Glory!
To the People's free-liberty, Freedom fair—Glory!"

This satire would be too shocking for a literal translation, even if this were possible technically; but it could not be left unmentioned in an impartial review of the fundamental features of Russian poetry, because its artistic value is too high, both in its truthfulness to the national ideas of right and wrong and in its inimitable, genuinely national form.

To a translator, Al'exèy Tolstòy is difficult in a different way to the one in which Kol'tzòv is difficult. After all, Kol'tzòv's wild-flower-freshness is a kindred spirit to Barnes, although Kol'tzòv writes not in a dialect, but in that folk's speech which is classical throughout Russia; while the bloom of Al'exèy Tolstòy's Old Russian poetry, equally classical in its living national speech, can be rather compared to a towering sunflower of the Russian orchards, with an unbreakable, stout, upright, strangely prickly stem, and with the immense flower itself always facing the sunshine, and containing a mass of substantial seed set in a disc of cool, pine-flavoured, snow-white substance. . . . A wide-open, outright-brave, golden, healthy, laughing flower of the Russian land! Handfuls of its eatable seed are never absent from the pockets of any lad or child or maiden, workman soldier or servant, when it is not worktime, but the time of leisure, of chatting and joking and singing. . . .

Al'exèy Tolstòy is very much alike to Pùshkin in

reflecting the genial resourcefulness of the national Russian character. Nevertheless, sympathizing sadness, metaphysics, and even mere melancholic self-centredness, count in Russia more in the minds of the public than the talent of creating and sharing joy! That is why those who can't help loving Pùshkin will insist on dragging his passing moments of sadness (or of grandeur, as in the *Poet*, *Prophet*, and *Monument*) to the foreground, and will fumble and fumble in his clear sunshine, longing to find a mist under it—as if sunshine were not a realm of power and beauty in itself! . . . And that is why Al'exèy Tolstòy, too, has seldom been placed on the deserved height, and why some modernists shrug their shoulders at him.

He is akin to Pùshkin in another point as well—namely, in the technique of strictly scanning, irreproachable rhythm. Here are a few words from Al'exèy Tolstòy's Memoirs about his happy childhood:

"From the age of six my sacred delight was to study a small book of poems in my possession, with which I used to conceal myself in the garden for hours. I soon grasped the technique of various meters, and, however weak my first creations were, I must say that with regard to rhythm they were irreproachable." . . . What would the seven-year-old poet (in 1824) have thought of the latest influence of the verse libre on the Russian versification?

My reader may ask: "What about his life?" But in answer to this I feel inclined to quote the first

lines from *Anna Kar'ènina*: "Happy families are all alike. Every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way."

There is nothing individually interesting in a smooth sailing, even that of a fine poet. A happy childhood, natural development in excellent conditions, travelling abroad, life at home on a beautiful estate, an exceptionally happy marriage, high standing, prosperity, appreciation on the part of the literary world (in spite of its political debating)—what is there about all these circumstances that would stir the feelings of anyone except a special biographer? This book is not a volume of biographies of certain *men* and *women*, but a gallery of silhouettes of *poets;* and their lives are interesting only inasmuch as they are out of the ordinary, or where they have influenced the poet's works.

Al'exèy Tolstòy's poetry—a happy poetry—is much more striking than his happy life. Of course, it would not develop in such a major key if it had not been tuned up to it by a chain of lucky circumstances; but it is permissible for us to remain incurious in this case. After all, there are so few poets who do not perpetually suffer for themselves or for others, who do not stand solitary, mourning and condemning, complaining and regretting, that it is quite justifiable to treat the one like Al'exèy Tolstòy as a *poet only.* There are, of course, some happy people besides him, but they do not necessarily make good poets. He was one. His verse gives relief and delight (in the original, I mean), the Russian intonations ring

through it. The breeze of the steppes wafts through it. The two little poems translated here (pp. 254 and 255) contain all the national Russian psychology in a nutshell: no half-measures, no half-heartedness in anything (*If thou Lovest*); and, the unattainable ideals of a characteristically Russian spirit (*Ah, if Mother Volga*): there is much in those quaint fourteen lines if you care to see it. There are the universally human phantastic longings; there is a frank acknowledgment of the failures of both sexes; there is the national Russian thirst for knowledge—a childlike, healthy inquisitiveness; there is the "naughty" humour; the hopeless dreaming with regard to knavish distillers, to having spare money, to officialdom; there are allusions to poverty. . . . The meditations grow spontaneously serious towards the end, and make one think of Turgèn'ev's well-known remark: "If you have a long talk with an Englishman, it will eventually lead to the subject of sports; with a Frenchman, to woman; with a Russian, to Russia."

ONE OF BORÌS GODUNÒV'S SOLILOQUIES FROM THE DRAMA "FEÒDOR IOÀNNOVICH"

⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — } *varying in*
⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — } *order.*

A TOWERING mount was Tsar' Ivàn; the thunder
Resounding deep within its bowels would echo
Throughout great Russia's plain, or, spurting forth,
Volcanic column would spread death and peril.
Tsar' Feòdor is unlike that: him would I
Compare to flowery mead where sudden pitfalls
Lie unperceived; concealing them, around,
The turf is clad in sweetest herbs and grasses;
But, wandering there, both shepherd and his flock
Slide down and perish in the green abyss.
There is a legend[1] current in our country,
That once a village church sank through the ground,
And over it remained a grass-clad hollow:
Our people call it "churchcomb 'neath the sod."
And rumours say that during quiet weather
Church bells go ringing loud within the earth,
And stately singing there resounds distinctly.
Tsar' Feòdor doth appear to me to be
Like to such saintly yet deceptive place:
Within his soul, e'er open to the good,
Dwell love and prayer and thought as pure as crystal;
One almost hears the bells within it chime. . . .
But where the use of saintliness and goodness,[2]
If no firm ground upholds this flowering mead?

'Tis seven years since o'er the land of Russia
Ivàn swept like a wave of God's great wrath!
'Tis seven years—one stone upon another
I lay with pain, my edifice to build:
That temple bright, that firm and mighty Russia,
That new and active and inspired Rus'—

Rus' over which in my heart poring ever
I pass my sleepless nights in hope and love! . . .
But all in vain! I'm building o'er a pitfall:
The meanest and unworthiest of the slaves
Has but to wish it, and complaisant Feòdor
Will bend his ear and heart to him; and all,
All thought and will with which I have imbued him
Shall vanish, ruining what I have done.

IT WAS IN EARLY-EARLY SPRING[3]

⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ —
⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑

It was in early-early spring;
New blades of grass were peering,
Rivulets ran, the warmth was soft,
Wood's greenness was transparent.
The shepherd's horn at break of day
Was yet unheard in village;
The forest ferns still had their fronds
In spikes of laces curling.
It was in early-early spring—
White gleamed the silver birches—
When I beheld thine eyes to smile
From under drooping eyelids. . . .
It was in answer to my love
Thine eyelashes did tremble—
O life! O woods! O sunshine clear!
O youth! O hopes high soaring! . . .
And tears rose up into my eyes
As I adored thy features. . . .
It was in early-early spring—
White gleamed the silver birches—
It was the morning of our life!
O happiness! O tears!
O life! O woods! O sunshine clear!
Fresh breath of silver birches!

"Hail to thee, father Sovereign!
Hail, my liege, P'otr Al'exèyevich!
Surely there were cereals over here?"
"Dirty ones, mother dear, dirty ones;
Dirty ones, my lady dear, dirty ones."

"Hail to thee, father Sovereign!
Hail, my liege, P'otr Al'exèyevich!
What is it thou stirrest thy porridge with?"
"With a stick, mother dear, with a stick;
With a stick, my lady dear, with a stick."

"Hail to thee, father Sovereign!
Hail, my liege, P'otr Al'exèyevich!
Thy porridge, it seems, will be rather thick?"
"Rather thick, mother dear, rather thick;
Rather thick, my lady dear, rather thick."

"Hail to thee, father Sovereign!
Hail, my liege, P'otr Al'exèyevich!
And 'tis likely it will taste rather over-salt?"
"Very salt, mother dear, very salt;
Very salt, my lady dear, very salt."

"Hail to thee, father Sovereign!
Hail, my liege, P'otr Al'exèyevich!
Who, then, will have to partake of it?"
"Children, of course, mother, children young;
Children, my lady dear, children young."

Mich. Kenyon

N'IKOLÀY AL'EXÊYEVICH N'EKRÀSOV

BARD OF THE PROLETARIAT

1821—1877

A TRANSLATION in prose, phrase by phrase, of all N'ekràsov's poetry (two bulky volumes) would be like unfolding beneath the eyes of a Westerner a map or a picture of the Russian land, showing innumerable details of the life of the proletariat and officialdom, of village toil and town vanity. This picture would be sore to one's eyes. N'ekràsov was the poet of suffering in general, and of Russian woman's suffering in particular; but, oh, how far from any sentimentality! Quite as far from it as Russian reality is.* The picture would abound in sharp, cutting shapes and colours, for he was the prophet of denouncement.

He came at the time of the omnipotent bloom of bureaucracy (before the Crimean War), hovering over the murk of serfdom, when the strain under the oppression was so great that "something had to happen." And he was the first to mould that lurking, engendering flow of civic thought which was harking to the people's suffering and preparing to lay the

* *The Russians and their Language*, pp. 204-212.

road for the emancipation—only just barking, and lurking, and preparing: because there was not such a thing as a pronounced progressive society in the beginning of the fifties. Therefore N'ekràsov was not following a general current, but chose an individual way for his sober mind and honest heart. The immense success of his first volume (1856), which overshadowed even Gogol's, showed that he spoke out that Something which was fermenting in the minds of many, but at that time had no way of public self-expression. That Something was an *idealistic longing for a realistic and civic substance* in literature. N'ekràsov picked up the threads of naturalism dropped by Gogol' and B'elinski, and thus blended with the engendering To-the-People movement of the younger generation. Certainly, that generation did not cherish any luxuries of art for art's sake, and it welcomed whole-heartedly his versified but real life-stories of cabmen, carters, gardeners, printers, sweating journalists, soldiers, hawkers, prostitutes, convicts, and peasants, illuminating all possible aspects of their hardships; descriptions of street scenes, fires, funerals, or tragic weddings, cruel dissipations, vulgarity and platitudes of town life, corruption of officialdom, etc.—all this appeared for the first time in the annals of Russian poetry.

It was for that very reason that some Russians called N'ekràsov (and some of them still call him) "not a poet, but a newspaper reporter"; the question still rises from time to time: "Was N'ekràsov a poet, or was he not?" But his admirers love him

for that very element of his writings which makes him a "civic" poet.

The fact is that the substance of N'ekràsov's poetry overweighs its technical value and overshadows its occasional rays of pure lyric beauty. His realism as a thinker and publicist has certainly never reached that realism which turned Pùshkin's sketches into pearls of creation. Nevertheless, N'ekràsov's deepest suffering caused by deepest love for the people, the clearness and honesty of his observations, and his essentially Russian speech, are national treasures to most people of our land.

Very Russian, too, is the vein of bitter satire interwoven into his work. He calls his Muse "the Muse of sorrow and vengeance"; and when it comes to characteristic touches of Russian bureaucracy, the last days of convinced serf-owners, silly philanthropy, the degeneration of the rich, etc., N'ekràsov's lines are as pointed as arrows. His sarcasm is never abstract in wit either, but always rooted in facts, facts, facts—reminiscent of the exactness of photography. He and Dostoyèvski are the two men whose passionate love for Russia was to them unbearable suffering at the same time; only, Dostoyèvski is ever throbbing, and this makes him unconsciously intensify Russian reality by culminating too many extreme features in one character, while with N'ekràsov every detail of Russian life remains a separate haut-relief, full of meaning in its own place.

Sound knowledge and doubtless sincerity of this

poet account for his power over the minds of the masses of Russian population. Everyone understands him; there is nothing in his poetry that requires wondering over its meaning; nor is there any of that elegant mentality about him which makes T'ùtchev's and Fet's creations a kind of refined delight for the epicureans of literary art. N'ekràsov knew this very well, but the starting-point of his poetry was different from theirs altogether:

> "Be at one with my Muse of distress:
> I have no other lilt in possession.
> He who lives without wrath or depression
> Love of Motherland does not possess."

N'ekràsov was born in 1821 into a family of the landowner's class, once upon a time very wealthy, but rather down in luck. The boy's childhood was passed in his father's country place in the centre of Russia, and at the gymnasia (Government secondary school) in Yaroslàv. His early development was due to the attention which his mother paid to it. When at school, N'ekràsov wrote satirical verse which was most popular amongst his comrades, but which made the victims of his inspiration—the school staff—furious. The boy had to leave, and was sent by his father to finish his education at the "Nobility's Military School" in St. Petersburg. Provided with very scanty means, only fifteen years old, the boy found himself amidst the pitfalls of life in a capital. Some new and wise friends, realizing his nature and gift, dissuaded him from entering the military school, and helped him to pass the entrance exams to the

University. His tutor "sat in the course of their studies in his dressing-gown, unwashed, unbrushed, and with a quart of vodka before him; but he was a clever teacher." N'ekràsov's vocation was saved; but the practical possibility of existence was almost annihilated: his father declined to send another copper for ever after. Provided with his passport of "a youngster from the nobility," the student had three years of being everlastingly hungry. His means were $3\frac{3}{4}$ pence per day, which had to be shared with another young man and his boy-serf! . . . The appalling food on which they lived was the cause of the illness which brought N'ekràsov to his grave forty years hence; but at the age of eighteen he had struggled through, in spite of the doctor's verdict that he was to die, due to exhaustion from starvation. Being at times left literally out in the streets at night, with only a copper for a shelter, he certainly did not spurn any work; he even wrote petitions and business papers of all kinds for the illiterate destitutes, thus earning farthings. . . . The fruitful part of this life was, that, mixing with the dregs of the proletariat, he learned to know it thoroughly; whilst the pathos of the situation was increased by the most comfortable life which other students were leading side by side with N'ekràsov's need. The young man, known as almost a beggar, was not only accepted, but even appreciated, by "the plump and sleek ones," in whose company his wit and brightness were quite prominent. This gave him the first-hand knowledge of the manners of life of the rich and

lazy, too, which later on found its place in his works.

By-and-by his labours on the treacherous seas of journalism, and his friendship with some nice prominent people in the literary circles, brought him nearer the shore. Amongst his writing of reviews, reports, and little plays "to order," he at last found chances to listen to the calls of his own Muse. But she was of that nature which never made him shut himself up in a *tête-à-tête* with her; he continued living in a constant intercourse with individuals and circles of all kinds—literary, theatrical, students, society, and official—and thus came cross the critic B'elïnski whose friendship and outlook soon became the decisive moving spirit of N'ekràsov's own poetry as well as of his editorial activity. He became the editor of the *Contemporary* (first founded by Pùshkin), which be brought to the height of *the* leading progressive periodical—the first one in Russia. In the course of his twenty years of work on it, he attracted to it all the best literary forces of that time—Dobrol'ùbov, Al'exèy Tolstòy, Turgèn'ev—and brought out the volume of T'ùtchev's poetry, all of which shows that he was ever so far from being narrow in his democratic convictions. But Turgèn'ev, with his well-known quarrelsome nature, soon came to differences with the *Contemporary* and left it, after which the work of its remaining circle went better than ever. N'ekràsov's own first volume was published in 1866; as mentioned before, it was a success on a large scale, which deeply touched him. He always

was extremely critical of his writings, and appreciated the severest judgments:

> " Thou hast none of poetry's light freedom,
> My severe and clumsy, rustic verse."

But it touched by its tone and sincerity the hearts of the Russians. The poet finally emerged from the grip of poverty.

It was at that period that all his best poems, all of them long, were written: *Who lives in Mother Russia now quite Happily and Free? Meditations at the Head-Entrance, Frost-the-Red-Nose, The Railway, The Unfortunate, Peasants' Children, Grandfather, Russian Women, Recent Times,* etc.

After 1865 N'ekràsov became weaker in health, but continued his journalistic activity in the winter time, as well as his favourite sport in the summer. He used to go to the estate of his brother's in the Yaroslàv government, where he had his own hunting lodge. This was where and how he " scooped," as we say in Russian, his knowledge of peasantry. He was a passionate hunter since early boyhood, and would never have a hunters' team, but start out alone, with provisions for a week or so. Then he would visit on his way some peasants, his personal friends, as good hunters as himself, and go with one or two of them to those special nooks the kind of which make a hunter's heart leap. But, besides the sport itself, it was that intercourse with the peasants that his " Citizen-Muse " longed for. Owing to his straightforwardness and common-sense, the peasants felt quite at home with him, and did not mind telling

him any of their experiences; he followed the facts and the speech of their tales with reverence, the result of which was the genuine peasants' spirit in N'ekràsov's stories in verse, which make them in most cases absolutely untranslatable. I found it possible to interpret (to some extent) only some quotations from the 300-page long rustic story *Who lives in Mother Russia now quite Happily and Free?* to which the song *Rus'* belongs, too. In order to do N'ekràsov justice, I shall have to give my reader the contents of one of his much beloved poems *Princess Volkònskaya* in prose: it is translatable, but runs forty-five pages long. The most popular of his few short poems is *When I the Horrors read of War* (p. 286), very typical of him, too. . . . I could hardly cope with it; it is Mr. Wilfred Blair to whom I am indebted for this translation almost entirely.

After nearly two years of a painful illness of the throat organs (supposed to have been the result of the starvation-years in his youth), N'ekràsov died in Petersburg in the winter of 1877. In spite of suffering, he worked as editor of another periodical almost to his last day; in his last year he wrote a poem 1,800 lines long, but it was prohibited by the censor altogether. N'ekràsov certainly had known much trouble through the censorship; but he had never been "punished" or banished, probably because there was no directly-rousing call in his works.

Pùshkin said that his Muse "loved him in his infancy, and left her bewitched flute in his cradle,"

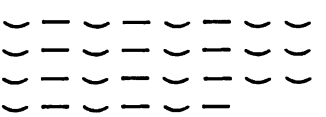
. . . As a contrast to this "aerial" Hellenic verse of the great master, N'ekràsov wrote (in the same Alexandrian metre): "No! I cannot remember a beautiful Muse singing sweet melodies over my cradle, . . . My Muse rocked it in wild fits of sinister merriment, swearing to wage war on wrong, calling for vengeance and for God's thunder. . . . But the gust of vehement cruelty could not live long in her soul, so loving and tender, though embittered. . . . Slowly the painful passions abated; and the hurricane of wild temper was atoned by a divine moment when, her head drooping low, she whispered: 'Forgive thy enemies.' . . ."

Lack of space makes it absolutely impossible to retell the numberless short stories and sketches in verse which give absolutely true pictures of the uncannily rough side of Russia. Yet N'ekràsov would remain a stranger to my reader if I did not try to give some idea of these typical works of his.

The long-long poem *Who lives in Mother Russia now quite Happily and Free?* reflects *the* problem of the Russian land. . . . It begins by the chance meeting of seven peasants on a country roadway. The names of the villages and districts whence they come are in themselves meaningful. I could not possibly find parallel nouns for them in English, but here is their general sense:

> "The Spurred-one and Grief-laden-one,
> Void-empty-one and Patched-one,
> The Raggéd-one, Bare-footéd-one,
> The Chilléd and the Hungry-one,
> Bad-harvest-one as well. . . ."

These names are not exaggerated, either; their kind exists, scattered over the land, created by the peasants' grim wit! . . . The above lines may show the metre of this poem; with the exception of a few stories inserted in it, it runs in—



The longer lines are repeated from two to four times, and often get extra dactyls within them:

or, on the other hand, get an occasional beat on the last syllable.

The pure, undiluted peasants' speech of this work will for ever remain untranslatable; not through any grammatical mistakes (our peasants never, never say "I says," or "he do," or "we tries"), but being immensely enriched by the national twists and turns, and dactyled words.* I can only feebly reflect its general nature in some quotations.

The peasants began to argue over the question:

"Who lives in Mother Russia now
Quite happily and free?
'The rich landowner!' shouts Romàn;
'No, the chinòvnik!' shouts Demyàn;

* Стра́нички, поклони́лися, роди́менький, размы́кавши, любе́хонько, вельмо́жескій, раздража́лася, натѣ́шившись, чужеда́льняя сторо́нушка, цѣлко́вики, забо́тушка, вольго́тная, по бо́жески, проклика́вши, etc. There are *literally* hundreds of such-like most Russian expressions in the two big volumes of N'ekràsov.

Lukà shouts: ' No, the pop !'
' The big fat-bellied merchant-man !'
Declare the brothers Gùbiny,
Ivàn and Mitrodòr.
Pahòm looked deep in thoughts, and said,
His head bent down: ' Th' illustrious
Boyàrin, Tsar's great minister.'
And Prov said: ' No, the Tsar' !' "

In the heat of the argument, the seven men march along the highroad till they are overtaken by night-fall. . . .

" Ye shadows, nightly shadows black !
Who is there you'll not overtake ?
Who is there whom you could not catch ? . . .
'Tis only you, night's shadows black,
One ne'er can catch, embrace ! . . ."

After a halt and a drink at the roadside, they take up their dispute again, and soon come to actual fighting over it. A stray cow, attracted by the noise, walks up, and, staring at their bonfire, adds her bellow-bellow-bellow. . . . A raven watches eagerly, praying to the devil that some of the men would actually finish the others. . . . Even the fox, after having vainly listened, says that " the devil himself couldn't make head or tail of it !" At last, with " their ribs aching," the peasants come to their senses, drink some water from a pool, wash themselves in it, and lie down to rest. A little bird, thankful to one of them for having shown pity to her little one (a very Russian contrast), gives them a fantastic tablecloth " that would bedeck itself with food and drink " (the fairy-tale expression: **скáтерть самобрáнная**), and they start off on their what would be

called in English "walking tour," and is in Russian something like "the dear road-journeying," with the decision not to return home until they solve the problem.

They meet peasants, artisans, beggars, soldiers, but do not trouble them with their question. . . .

> "With awls the soldiers shave themselves,
> With smoke the soldiers warm themselves:
> What happiness is this! . . ."

The encountered village pop takes the question seriously, and talks to them "along-the-soul," as we say in Russian.* He understands "happiness" as "peace, respect, and wealth." . . . "It is not one's bones only," says he, "that ache in attending to all those who are born, fall ill, or die at any time of night or of toil: there is no heart that could stand the sight of human pains without suffering, too. . . . Respect? Shall I not hurt you, brothers, by discussing *what* 'respect' you show to us? . . . Whom do you call 'colts'? Whom are you afraid to meet in the road?† Of whom do you make fun? . . . How do you treat mother-popadyà (the priest's wife), and a pop's daughter, and any clerical student? . . ."

The peasants, confused, bend their heads and are silent. The poor pop remains also silent for a while; turning his large soft hat in his hands, he just looks at the skies. There comes a charming lyrical bit:

* *The Russians and their Language*, p. 102.

† There is a superstition that it is a bad omen to meet a priest, as well as to see a hare running across your way.

"There one side of the firmament
Got overshadowed heavily
With dark, unrifted cloudiness . . .
It frowned and shed its tears. . . .
And streaks of grey hung wearily
Down to the mother earth.
While nearer to the peasants, from
Behind wind-ragged cloudlets, was
The sun a-peeping laughingly,
As peeps a maiden playfully
Behind the sheaves of corn."

Then the pop takes up the third item of happiness: "The dear old times are gone: no more landed gentry who used to come to their estates to be wedded, baptized, or buried! . . . No more of the old customs that gave a chance both to priest and peasant. . . .

"Ye cherished bones of gentle folk,
Ye Russian bones, ye noble bones,
Where aren't ye buried nowadays?
What country holds ye not? . . ."

There is nothing now for a village priest to live on, says he, except the peasants' coppers; and he knows by his own dread hardships what each copper coin means to a peasant. . . .

"Dread horror in the family
Of peasants when its leader dear
Is swept away by death.
One buries him, and afterwards
One tries to help the living ones
By keeping up, if possible,
Their spirits in their loss.
And there one sees the mother old
Of the dead man, who's stretching out
Her stiff and bony hand. . . .
And one's own soul turns round within

One's bosom, when two coppers chink
In that dear rugged hand.
Of course, it is mere honesty
To take one's pay for rites of Church:
To take it not means death.
But words of consolation die
Upon one's lips, and, strangely hurt,
Homeward one makes one's way."

The man drives gently on. Six of the peasants, of course, attack the one who said that a pop's life was the happy one; but he won't give in. He has known, says he, a pop's family: the popadyà was sleek and plump, and her daughter was pink and white, and their horse was clean, and their bees were booming like church bells.

Presently they come across a fair:

" 'Tis not the wind a-storming high,
Not mother earth a-shaking low;
'Tis swinging, singing, swearing hot,
Heaving like waves and wallowing,
Embracing, kissing, fighting too,
The people at the fair! . . .

. . . . . .

The sun of spring plays merrily
On heads of tipsy peasantry;
And everything's a tipsy, loud,
Red, motley holiday.
The fellows' breeches—velveteen,
The fellows' waistcoats—colour-striped;
Their shirts—all rainbow shades.
Young women's clothes all bright and red,
Young maidens' plaits beribboned all,
They're swimming out like swans.
Casting her wrathful look at them,
A bitter Old-believer thus
Unto her neighbour says:
' Hunger will strike them! Hunger soon

Will come on them ! No wonder that
The corn is drowned in floods !
Since women first did deck themselves
In red, it has been ever thus. . . .
The forests have not grown, and it
Is no good sowing corn !'
' What have red shirts to do with it,
Good mother ? . . . Very sorry, but
I can't quite understand.'
' Why, all red shirts are Frenchmen's make.
They're dyed in blood of dogs ! It's now
Quite clear to you, I hope !' "

Of course, the true colour of this poem can be clear only to those who have seen this aspect of Russia, because N'ekràsov loses as much in translation as Kol'tzòv's does. The chapter about the fair and the one that follows, " The Drunken Night," which depicts the swarms of people dispersing from the fair, is a masterpiece for which alone N'ekràsov would deserve to be ranged with the classics. You can hear and see that half-drunken, immense crowd moving in the night along the highroad, talking, arguing, love-making, meditating. . . . A highly receptive crowd, and one that could not do without singing, of course: they are somewhat infirm in walking, but

" Their song outrolls in stateliness,
In wide and swinging liberty,
Like cornfield waving windily,
Filling the hearts of peasantry
With yearning, pain, and fire."

The main deep touch of it is the talk of an " earth-coloured," shrivelled little peasant who answers to an " intelligent's " reproach with regard

to drunkenness.* . . . The peasant speaks of what the "drinking" Russian peasantry can do and stand. . . . Their cups, their mouthfuls, have been counted and recorded. But are their hardships counted? Is their toil measured? Is their hard luck recorded? Is their misery recorded? . . . The peasant drinks till he is half dead, and toils till he is dead. . . . His stomach is a hollow, his creased skin is like scorched soil, his colour is that of an old brick, his hands are like the bark of an old tree, his hair is like sand. . . . His soul could bleed with pain and thunder with indignation, and, instead of that, it laughs good-heartedly after a cup of wine! *This* is to be wondered at, and not the item that he does not mind rolling down into a ditch. . . . *But should a great grief come to us, we'll give it up, that drinking!*" . . .

Now, was this not a forecast, by one who knew the peasantry to the marrow of their bones? . . .

After much wandering and having heard many grim stories of all sorts, the seven peasants remain without a solution to their problem; and the only consolation suggested by the author comes in a cute, subtle touch: a son of a psalm-singer, a young man of medium education, but with a knowledge of, and a deep feeling for, all the "downtrodden ones" amongst whom he lives, finds exaltation in "putting together" songs about their pains and greatness. . . . The whole long poem ends with the moment when

* An "intelligent" means in such cases a man of education who mixes with the people for the purpose of enlightening them.

"a great truth tells itself" to that young man in a song. He lives through an evening and a night of perfect exaltation in creating that song, which he means to sing to the workmen in the morning. "Our seven wanderers would be able to sleep quietly under their roofs if they could know what the young man's feelings were," says N'ekràsov.

> "In his breast rose throbbingly powers unembraceable,
> In his ears rang melody—henceforth undefaceable:
> Words of azure radiance, noble in benignity,
> Hailing coming happiness and the People's dignity."

There is a touch of a deep thought in this: obviously, N'ekràsov sees the only happiness of life in creative work. The song that brings with it particular elation to the young man is *Rus'* (p. 287). It is certainly as essentially Russian both in thought and speech as the spirit of the land itself is. Song forms a big, meaningful part of the Russian peasantry's life; N'ekràsov knew and felt this. In one of his poems a driver drops a fine thought: "Russian song tells no lies."

N'ekràsov was a true representative of the best Russian Intelligentzia: not an extremist verging in his progressiveness on narrowness (which happens sometimes), but a mind responsive to all suffering. He made no class distinctions when that suffering was true, and his historical characters of the Princess Volkònskaya and Princess Trubetzkàya stand out as true to life as any of his country types, all of them lit up by the warm glow of the poet's feeling. And the

two long poems *Russian Women* take the reader into a new sphere.

By the way, the first of them, *Princess Trubetzkàya*, is one of the rare cases in Russian verse-writing in general, although not exceptional amongst N'ekràsov's works in particular: it is written from beginning to end in couplets, and, what is more, in couplets of short rhymes only. As my reader must have rightly gathered from the Introduction, this form is as rare with the Russian poets as it is natural with the English ones; and N'ekràsov is the only one of our classics who has used it, in several long poems, side by side with his countless dactyls.

Both *Russian Women* are wives of the first Russian revolutionaries, of the "Decembrists" Prince Volkònski and Prince Trubetzkòy, and N'ekràsov's historically true accounts deal with their voluntary journeys right across the Siberian tundra,* with the purpose of joining their husbands in their prison-life. When Princess Volkònskaya (the feminine ending of the name) sees the boundless tundra for the first time, she says to herself:

> "'Tis here that covetousness' force
> Sent man to fetch the gold. . . .
> It lies along the rivers' course,
> Down in the marshes cold.
> The labour in the deep needs will,
> Marshes are dread in heat;
> And yet, 'tis worse, 'tis harder still
> Deep underground to breathe!

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* The frozen steppe marches.

There stillness reigns, as in the graves,
Darkness there ever reigns. . . .
Oh why, cursed land of gold and slaves,
Ermak* has found thy plains?" . . .

I have quoted these lines to give a sample of N'ekràsov's short-rhymed couplets in which the poem runs; and I must mention what obstacles the poor young Princess met with, in spite of the royal permission which she obtained for her extraordinary journey to N'erchìnsk, the remotest centre of a mine district.

At the mail-station in Irkùtsk (the first big town on the great Siberian highway) she was met by a gentlemanly, pedantic general who took great troubles in trying to persuade her to give up her task. Day after day he kept her at the station, declining to give horses for her vozòk (возо́къ, a hooded chaise on runners; кибѝтка is another name for that winter vehicle). After having vainly described the cold and the possible hunger that awaited her on her weeks-long journey, the general declared that she had to sign "an abdication of all her rights of nobility and inheritance." "Where is that document?" exclaimed the young woman: "Give it quick, I'll sign it this minute! What a child you are, general, to have kept me so long with such a trifle! Why didn't you tell me that before?" . . . So, the trick failing, he tells her that he has no permission to give

* Ermak was a leader of wandering cozacks, who is supposed to have "conquered" Siberia and presented it to Ivàn Gròzny (the Terrible); in reality, the acquisition of that immense land did not take place so abruptly, nor altogether in the way of a military invasion only.

her homes; she would have to walk with a batch of convicts (no army), tied with a rope to thieves and murderers, with convicts on all sides. . . . "Many of them cannot stand those marches, and drop dead on the way," says he.—"But that will take months! Oh, let me join them at once! . . . How cruel of you to have kept me here a whole week! . . ." Then the old man grasps the impossibility of shaking her will; he covers his eyes with his hand and calls out in a different voice: "You shall go! You shall, even if I pay my own head for disobeying orders! . . . Hey! Horses for the Princess—at once! . . ."

Here ends the poem about Princess Trubetzkàya; the one about her friend is the most romantic of the two and more complete.* It is given in the form of memoirs written by Princess Volkònskaya herself at the time when she, an old woman, is telling her story in a simple, unaffected way to her grandchildren. (Her husband was allowed to return in 1856.)

She was a daughter of a general, a hero of 1812, who, without asking her many questions, married her to another, a young general, Prince Volkònski. Happily, the girl admired the man—which was the first stage of her love for him.

"Two weeks after father spoke to me I stood in the church, being wedded to Sergèy Volkònski. I got to know him but very little while we were engaged, and I had little chance to learn him after the marriage. He was constantly

* However much I like its vivid details, I can give only a very condensed gist of the contents, because my publisher is afraid this book will burst its cover.

away from home, inspecting his brigade, which was scattered all over the district." (She had no notion that it was not so much official duty, as the secret work of preparing the events of December 14, 1824, the revolt on the day of Nicholas I.'s enthronement.)

" Surgèy came to me at Odessa, and there
One week I spent safely and soundly
With him at headquarters. . . . New peril and care!
One night I was sleeping profoundly,
But suddenly heard my Sergèy's anxious voice
Awaking me (dawn was just rising):
' Be quick and get up, please, and find me my keys,
And light me the fire!' Grief surmising,
I jumped to my feet. He was anxious and wan. . . .
I did as he bid me, and, turning
All boxes and drawers out in haste, he began
To set lots of documents burning.
Some letters he read, or just hastily scanned,
The others he burned without reading;
And I, who was tremblingly lending a hand,
Kept poking them in, the flames feeding.
And then, gently touching my hair, said Sergèy,
' We're going quite early this morning. . . .'
A space—all was packed, and without more delay,
Without one good-bye, without warning,
We started. My husband, sad, full of grave care,
With me to my father's place travelled
Three days—would not stay, but went, leaving me there
Alone with my problem unravelled."

" What did that night mean? . . . Why his pallor, his silence?"

She gives birth to a boy, and, after a long illness, learns that everyone is gone from the estate to Petersburg, and she is left with the staff of servants only. She flies to the capital. More secrecy! No one will tell her where her husband is; no papers are given to her, no letters answered. After three weeks of it she is on the verge of failing with anxiety, when she comes across a newspaper in which the text of the trial of the Decembrists is printed, as well as the verdict. . . . " What! Sergèy a conspirator, preparing

ruin for his country? . . ." An open talk with her father comes as a salvation: he knew it all beforehand, and he is on Sergèy's side, although now he cannot forgive himself having married his daughter to him. She entirely excuses her husband's reticence, and her spirits rise high. . . . "The misfortune is great, but people live in Siberia, too! . . . I am going with him." She learns from her sister that there is a chance of seeing him at the prison. In the course of the few minutes of their painfully blissful meeting in the gaol, Sergèy realizes the nature of his child-like wife from a whispered sentence. . . . "Then, *that* is what thou art!" says he, astonished and deeply moved.

Of course the whole of the large aristocratic family protests vigorously. No one understands her. . . . "But my husband needs me more than my baby-boy does!" she is trying to explain. "My son will have you all around him, and when he grows up *he* will understand his mother. . . First I adored my husband from afar, as a hero; then as my child's father; but I first really loved him when he stood before me in his prison clothes. I am going to share his lot." The relatives become sullen, silent. Weeks fly without her father or mother giving their consent. She writes a personal letter to Nicholas I., and her sister takes it to him. . . .

"His answer was kind and chivalrous; he wrote in French. He told me first how dreadful were the land, the people, the life. . . . Then he hinted that there was no hope of returning, and said he was sorry he could not forgive my husband, and then deigned to praise me and to give me his permission, although he would prefer me to stay with my son.

"I was going—going! . . . I bought a vozòk lined with furs. Three days passed in preparation. The last night I spent bending over my little boy. . . . He played with the large red seal of the Emperor's letter. . . . The morn found him sound asleep and me still praying at his cradle. . . .

"The hour of parting was horrible; no one would believe that I was actually going to drive, alone, through the thousands of miles. . . . At last father spoke; he held his arms over me, and uttered, hardly audibly, just this: 'If thou wilt not return in one year's time, I shall curse thee!' . . I fainted. . . . At last tears and embraces had to be stopped. The tròyka dashed off. . . . After three days of flying I halted in Moscow at my sister's. She was then the queen of Moscow society, adored by Pùshkin and everyone. She understood me. 'Rest till the evening, and then we shall have a festival in thy honour. Thou wilt meet the best of people and hear the best artists.' In those days the lot of our husbands was in the hearts of everybody, especially in Moscow. The joke of Count Rostopchìn was on all lips, too: 'In Europe revolutions are made by cobblers who want to become gentlemen, which is sense; with us, a revolution was made by the highest aristocrary: did they want to become cobblers?' . . . I was the heroine of the day. Most gorgeous carriages were filing up to the porch in a long queue. . . . Old courtiers and Court ladies of the preceding reign, my father's fellow-officers, relatives of all the Decembrists, aristocratic society, great favourite writers, artists—amongst them the young poet who perished so early (L'èrmontov). . . . The old ladies embraced me: 'What heroism! What times! . . .' Pùshkin was there, too, the playfellow of my early youth. . . . I thought of those days in the Crimea when he and I ran away from my governess, and I paddled in the sea. . . . Pùshkin looked at me and laughed. I blushed with pleasure later on when I read the beautiful lines in *Evgèni On'ègin*. Now I am old and can say that he was a little in love with me in those days; but, frankly speaking, with whom was he not in love? . . . I think his real love was his Muse only. . . . Now in Moscow we walked up and down the hall. He dropped his humorous tone. I remember what he said, only I cannot say it so beautifully: 'Go, go! Your spirit is power; your patience is wealth. . . . Tsar's wrath cannot last for ever. . . . But

if your lot is to die there, all hearts will go out to you. Your story will be told and retold by your great-grandchildren. . . . But what am I talking about?—we may meet yet! Tsar' has ordered me to write the story of Pugachòv; I shall have to go to the Ural, and hence shall fly over to you! . . .' The poet has written his story, but never came to us: how could he? . . .* I greedily listened to the music. . . . 'Oh, sing, sing, to me!' I asked them: 'Let me have my fill of it! . . .' All artists surpassed themselves. . . . The parting was grave—tears in everyone's eyes, and a 'God guard you!' from everyone as they shook hands with me. . . . I started at dawn.

"The usual pictures of our Russian land! Plains covered with diamond-shining snow-sheets, villages half buried in the snow; here and there a large country house and a cupola of a church; endless goods-caravans, crowds of women pilgrims, rattling mail-carts; a figure of a merchant sprawling on a heap of pillows and cushions in his sledges; waggons of *soldàtiki* (soldiers), a batch of moustacheless young recruits surrounded by weeping women-folk. . . . An official courtier dashing by, standing in the sleigh, with his fists over the head of the driver; a hunters' team at the roadside. . . . Usual scenes at the mail-stations: children's faces pressed flat against the window panes, shivering fowls fighting each other, a poor horse tied and tossing in the stand: the smith comes with a red-hot hoof-iron. . . .

"Beyond Kazan' I heard the rumours that Trubetzkàya had been sent back; but I did not fear—I had my permission! . . . The farther, the worse the road. I cannot see the driver's back: there is a snowdrift between us two in the fore-part of the sledge. . . . We lost our way and turned over. The man found a hut; we woke up its owner, some destitute forest-keeper, and warmed ourselves with some tea. The blizzard was howling. We stretched ourselves on the benches for a night's rest. A young boy shifted two

* This is a hint to Pùshkin's "highly respectable" kind of imprisonment of his last years.

huge stones against the door: 'The bears are rather a bother,' explained he, and lay down on the bare floor. In the morning the forest keeper refused to accept any money: 'No, *rodnàya*; God guard thee! The roads are dangerous. . . .'

"So we went for three weeks; my vozòk was closed entirely, even the windows were covered with mats. One day I heard from this darkness the sounds of unusual excitement. I lifted a corner of the mat, and saw a village street lit up with bonfires and teeming with peasants, soldiers, horses. . . . 'The *s'er'ebr'ànka** is going to halt here,' my driver explained. Siberia was despatching her wealth. . . . I might hear something about our men, I thought, and I waited till the caravan came. A coarse-looking officer entered, and paced the room without a greeting. 'Have you heard anything,' I asked with abated breath, 'about the . . . victims of the Decembrists' affair? . . . How are they? . . .' He turned to me abruptly, impudent: 'No doubt they are right enough, but I do not wish to know them. I have seen enough of criminals!' And he went out. How painful this was to hear—my beloved ones! . . . But a poor soldier who was warming himself at the stove found a warm word for me in his heart: 'They are well, I have seen them all: they are in the Blagodàtski mines.' . . . The officer re-entered, and I hurried to my vozòk again. . . . I thank thee *soldàtik!* I thank thee, *rodnòy*! . . . In Irkùtsk they tried to make me stop, in the same way as they tormented Trubetzkàya.

". . . . The lake Baykàl! So cold at the crossing that tears froze on one's eyelashes. I also learned hunger during this part of the journey. The natives, Bur'àta, own the mail-stations. Their food is beef dried in the sunshine, and tea with lard! But, farther on, some generous merchant noticed me as he raced us on the roadway, and met me in the next little town with a festival in my honour in his home.

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* A noun derived from *s'er'ebrò*, silver; the term for the caravans taking the silver from the mine districts over to European Russia.

Spasibo! . . . I enjoyed the *pel'meni** and the hot bath-house, and slept on the sofa in his drawing-room while the festival was going on around me.

"In the morning we cantered into N'erchìnsk—and there was Trubetzkàya! . . . I could hardly believe my eyes: I have caught her up! We rushed to each other. . . . 'They are in Blagodàtski mines—twelve miles from here. . . .'

"Twelve miles only! . . .

"It was a stiff, clear, frosty day when our sledges dashed up to the house of the chief of the prison. He was huge, fat, and strict: 'Where is your permit?' 'Here is the copy. They have promised in Irkùtsk to send the original to N'erchìnsk.'—'I have not got it yet.'—'Here, then, is the personal letter from the Emperor himself.' The funny man did not know French, and would not believe me. 'Can't you see the signet and signature—*Nikolày!*' No he would not have it; he wanted the document from N'erchìnsk. I suggested to go back and fetch it at once myself, but he faithfully promised to see to it himself. 'And you, ladies, better have a night's rest.' We were taken to a hut without a chimney and with a talc window; lying down on the bench, I felt the back wall with my head and the door with my feet. But all these trifles seemed to be funny now. . . .

"I woke up and went out when Trubetzkàya was still asleep. About a hundred huts like ours were stuck on the slopes of a wide glen. . . . And here was the large brick house surrounded with iron railings. . . . I asked the sentry. . . . 'They' were out at work, he said. . . . Some children volunteered to show me the way. We ran. 'Do you ever see them?' I asked the children. 'Yes; they sing so lovely! . . . Here is the little door, see? . . . Now we must be off.' And back they ran.

"I saw a door leading down into the ground, and a soldier with an unsheathed sabre. It was not gold that helped me

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* Rich little meat-dumplings, a Siberian speciality *Spasìbo!* is an exclamation of gratefulness.

here, my beloved ones, although I offered gold! . . . Here, as everywhere, the simple folk counted their help as nothing. . . . I bow low to you, simple folk: *spasìbo! spasìbo!* . . .

"The sentry lit a torch for me and let me pass him. I began descending, descending. . . . Then there was a long endless kind of a passage, still going down, terrrace by terrace. It was dark and close. Mildew on the walls, water trickling down and gathering in pools underfoot. Lumps of earth breaking off here and there and rolling down with a rustle. There were gaping openings at the sides, probably similar passages branching off. My legs carried me fast. Suddenly I heard a voice: 'Where—where are you going? Want to kill yourself? Ladies not allowed here—stop!' It must have been the officer of whom the sentry was so afraid. The sound of his strides and his fierce voice were getting nearer. . . . I put out my torch and ran on in pitch darkness. I do not know how I escaped with my life there, mid terrible crevices, pitfalls, and hollows. A kind fate guided me. Soon I saw a faint light flickering ahead of me. I made the sign of the Cross, threw my fur coat away, and dashed on still faster. The light grew brighter and brighter. . . . Then I saw an open space, like a terrace, higher than where I was, and some shadows moving about it. . . . Hark! there are sounds of axes . . . voices. . . . It was work! Men! . . . Will they notice me? . . . The figures grew more distinct. Now I saw many lights moving about, and someone standing on the edge of the terrace called out: 'Look! look! Is this an angel?' 'We are not in Paradise!' laughingly retorted some voices; but several men ran up to the edge and stood motionless. . . . 'It is Volkònskaya!' suddenly called out Trubetzkòy (I recognized his voice). In a minute a ladder was lowered and I mounted it as if flying. . . .

"There they were, old friends all around me: Trubetzkòy, Muravyòv, Obol'ènski, the brothers Bor'ìsov. . . . Enthusiasm, praise, tears. . . . 'But where is my Sergèy?' 'They have gone to fetch him. He is finishing his task.

We get each three puds* of ore daily for Russia. . . . You see, we are not dead with toil!' They were so bright, but I read anguish beneath their fun. The sight of fetters on their hands and feet struck me; I did not know they were to be chained. I told Trubetzkòy the great news about his wife, and distributed the letters from the home-land. Meanwhile the officer ran up, and was raging below: 'Who has taken the ladder away? Where is the superintendent? Madame, come down at once! Give the ladder, you devils, quick!' But no one thought of doing it. We went, all together, deeper and deeper down the other side of the terrace. . . . Convicts ran to us from all sides, wondering. They cleared the way for me, offered stretchers to carry me. . . . Tools, pits, humps, and masses of earth. . . . Work was boiling to the jingling of irons and to the sound of songs. Axes hammered at the firm breast of the earth, men carried their loads walking along logs thrown over precipices. . . . 'Take care! Gently, gently!' I involuntarily called out to them.

"And then someone called out: 'He is coming!' . . . .

"I rushed forward, and very nearly fell down a deep ditch. Trubetzkòy caught me by the hand: 'You have not dashed across thousands of miles to perish here! . . .' Sergèy tried to walk as fast as he could; the irons on his feet clanged wearily. Convicts and sentries were silently making way for him. . . . And then he saw me—he saw me! . . . 'Màsha!' and he halted as if exhausted. Two men held him up. His outstretched arms trembled. . . . The sound of his voice made me forget everything in the world, even my father's threat. 'I am coming!' I cried. I tore my hand free from Trubetzkòy, and ran along a plank over the dark ditch. . . . I was at his side. I saw his clattering chains close to me—and only *then* I understood him fully. . . . My knees bent, and, before embracing my husband, I touched his irons with my lips. . . .

"In a second all became silent and motionless around.

* One pud (пудъ) is 40 pounds.

Not a clatter, not a bang, not a word. Everyone seemed to feel what we felt. . . .

"And then a furious shriek reached us from behind: 'Where are you all?' On hearing it, the old superintendent turned up, with tears in his eyes: 'Now you must go. I hid myself purposely; but it is time now, or the chiefs will scold me to death.' And I went down from the terrace as if from heaven to earth. . . .

"Well, this is all, my beloved ones—this is all! When down below, the officer swore at me in strong Russian, while Sergèy called out in French, from above: 'We shall meet in the prison, Màsha!'"

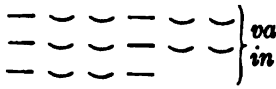
I hope my reader will feel the beauty of this story even in this frightfully condensed and abbreviated prose-form. But the main songs of N'ekràsov's heart were those about the peasant women. I tried to translate his famous *Orina, the Soldier's Mother*, but found scores of unconveyable forms of speech in it; and it had to be given up. It is a pity that *Frost-the-Red-Nose* is so frightfully long; it might give a glimpse into the picture of a fine, strong village woman's end: she has just buried her husband, and is frozen to death while taking a breath after chopping wood in the dense forest.

And yet, in spite of knowing all that "grief which submerges the Russian land deeper than Volga's floods drown the fields," N'ekràsov believed in Russia and in her future as only a Russian can believe:

> "Rus' knows no middle course. . . . Unspoken,
> Deep in her breast a stream unbroken
> Of powers run—pure, living, just:
> So in Siberia's virgin depths
> Run veins of gold 'neath frozen crust."

When I the horrors hear of war,
The name of each new victim reading,
My heart not for the hero, nor
For lover, wife, or friend, is bleeding.
Alas! love still will find relief,
And friends forget, how dear soever.
But there is someone else whom grief
Will torture with remembrance ever.
Amidst hypocrisy and sneers,
Life's daily prose and trivial dealing,
The only true and holy tears
I find in life for e'er unhealing
Are mothers' tears. In their regret
They cannot rest, nor e'er forget
Their sons who fell in that red reaping.
Ev'n so the willows, ever weeping,
Ne'er lift their branches drooping yet.

RUS'



Tsar' had been planning a
Fighting, a gory one,
With a strong foe.
Strength, wilt thou last with us?
Gold, wilt thou last with us?—
Wondered he hard.[1]

Thou art the barren[2] one,
And the abundant one,
And the great mighty one,
Powerless and powerful,
Dear Mother Rus'!

Right through the servitude
Clung to its freedom the
Golden one, golden one,
Heart of the People.

Power of the People is
Power the most powerful:
Conscience' clear purity,
Truth indestructible.

Rus' moves not . . . Motionless
Rus' might be dead, it seems!
But one spark suddenly
Burns up, hid deep in her,

And—there they rise, unasked;
And—there they come, self-tasked:
Grain after grain is brought,
Mountains of wrye are wrought;

Legions are swelling in
Numbers uncountable,
Power will be dwelling in
Them insurmountable!

Thou art the barren one,
And the abundant one,
And the downtrodden one,
And the ascendant one,
Dear Mother Rus'!

A. A. SHENSHIN-FET

AFANÀSIY AFANÀSYEVICH FET (SHÊNSHIN)

LYRIST

1820 — 1892

NOTHING could be more refreshing, after reading N'ekràsov, than the poetry of Fet. Let us point out at once his political attitude, and then both my reader and myself can forget Fet the "nobleman," and enjoy a rest with Fet the poet.

His was the hide-bound "nobility" (ДВОРЯНСТВО) of a rich landowner; Fet saw in the emancipation of the serfs a danger to Russia via the blow inflicted by it to the class of the nobles. This idea was dying out fast when Fet still believed in it. Although his poetry (as poetry "pure and simple") was hailed by N'ekràsov, *he* could not stand N'ekràsov's poetry, of course. "The time has come nowadays for all sorts of parvenus, upstarts!" was his contemptuous opinion. Every shade of liberal thought was strange to his political convictions.

For a long time he was bound by the strongest links of friendship with Turgèn'ev, until *that* admirer of refined elegance did not yield to the influences of the democratic social tide; Fet never did. In private life he was, nevertheless, a most interesting and kind companion, and counted amongst his best friends

Tolstòy and Al'exèy Tolstòy. But it was Turgèn'ev (before he chose to quarrel with Fet, as he did with very many of his friends) who first declared: "There is no Fet beyond Fet and Turgèn'ev, his prophet." In their immense correspondence Turgèn'ev went farther: "Don't talk to me about Heine! You are greater than Heine. . . . He who does not love Fet does not understand what poetry is."

Yet when Fet's poems first appeared in book form (1850) they did not sell at all. Those were the years for N'ekràsov's suffering Muse to be loved, but not for literary epicurism; and Fet himself thought more in those days of his large country place which he was bringing to a state of paying perfection, than of his verse-writing. He possessed great energy and resolution—not only in keeping up discipline amongst his workmen, I am glad to say, but also with regard to his own activity. After his twenty years of thorough work in the army, he worked for seventeen years as architect, gardener, agriculturist, and manager, on his own land; made a brilliant success of it, sold the place with much profit, bought another, and then only rested on his laurels and gave himself up to literature and verse-writing.

His double name is due to the fact that his father was married to a Lutheran in a Lutheran church, and the boy was born before a marriage in an Orthodox church had been performed as well. Therefore, by the Russian law (which in those days was quite different to its fair modern form), the child had to bear the maiden name of his mother. His

old-fashioned views made Fet always hate this circumstance, and he kept pleading all his life for permission to bear his father's name. It was granted to him very late, but the old poet made the event public, rejoicing at it immensely. Nevertheless, he was well known by that time as *Fet*, and *Fet* he remained to the literary world.

Being behind his times in other respects, Fet was quite "progressive" as a verse-writer. In 1889 appeared his volume *Evening Lights*. The dainty title and some telling lines in it suggested Fet's own view on his place in Russian poetry: a worshipper in the temple of stately classicism, he alone was lighting in it the last evening lights. . . . But the responding glow which these lights lit in the hearts of the wide literary public showed unmistakably that he not only was the last of the Mohicans, but, at the same time, overlapped with the coming team of the now reigning explorers: none of their darkness, but a scale of new half-shades; none of their profundity, but a herald's horn of their new half-tones. . . .

An ardent admirer of T'ùtchev, Fet was a truer pantheist than his forerunner had been: a poet *at one* with Nature in his adoration of her, and not one standing almost aghast in awe, as T'ùtchev did. Just a dainty, lace-like link with the philosophy of life, but not tearing his heart in twain over it. . . . "As if there were anything in life except love!" he called out in one of his elegies. . . . "I can see it, I can see it—The power of happiness unfurling its bright, bedewed scrolls! . . . Unembraceable, in-

conceivable, balmy, benignant, lies beneath us the world of Love." . . . "Song is in need of beauty, but beauty needs even no song." . . . "I am given thee Divine power to call to human bliss." . . . All this is very characteristic of Fet. No wonder it is said that there is not one couple of lovers in Russia who have not read Fet's poetry together!

He differs from the founders of our poetry in one very distinct feature: there is nothing nationalistic in Fet's works; he was the first among our classics who (unpretentiously) stood out as an entirely supernational singer. That is where he also joins hands with the modernists. Quite the only point about Fet which *is* Russian is his instinctive love for suffering. . . . He does not dwell upon it as Dostoyèvski does, but he is decidedly sincere when he says (addressing a woman): "I do not want any flashes of happiness, I do not want words or looks of compassion: leave me alone with my sobbing! If thou only knowest with what madly-happy, wearily-sweet grief my soul is intoxicated! . . ." And here is a nice thought:

> "To suffer—suffers all: suffers the beast
> Without a hope, or conscious knowing,
> Not being even there released
> Where joy of suffering is glowing."

In translating some of his "rosy veils and amber laces" poems, I was naturally handicapped by their forms; but their light and easy swing and the filigreed little lines are so all-important with Fet, that I thought, if I could interpret them in English, I

would give the main flavour of his poetry in spite of some absolutely unavoidable rephrasing. There are no very Russian words or expressions about him, and the necessary rephrasing does *not*, therefore, rob him of any essential features, as it does in the numberless cases of nationalistic works. To catch his style and his music—individual but not "Russian"—was not very difficult, and I have allowed myself the liberty of *not* having these translations revised by Mr. Wilfrid Blair. Thus, counting *The Demon* and Al'exèy Tolstòy's poems, this is the third case in this volume where I feel independent and answerable for all the sins!

The translated part of a poem (p. 297) is interesting as illustrating the fascination of the "white nights" of our northern summer. The same adoration reflected here as in Pùshkin's *Bronze Horseman*—and yet how different, how typical in each case of realism and of impressionism!

"Where are the sonnets?" I can hear my reader ask. The point is that sonnets were not as favoured a mode of composition with our poets of the last century as they were in the West. L'èrmontov has two or three; Pùshkin, just two; Kol'tzòv, Al'exèy Tolstòy, and N'ekràsov, none; T'ùtchev and Fet have a few. I think it will be more typical to introduce the modern sonnets, as they are quite frequent in the poetry of this century.

In one point Fet is quite an exception, not only amongst the Russian poets, but even amongst schoolchildren: in spite of the absolutely clear, definite laws

of Russian punctuation, strictly founded on syntax, which one naturally learns by the age of fifteen, Fet entirely ignored them! He hardly ever put any punctuation marks, and, if he did, they were usually wrong ones. He let his proof-correctors, publishers and editors put them where and how they liked. In a similar way, he never troubled about the classification of his poetry in book form. As a rule, poets are very punctilious in that respect. But Fet liked his poems to be mixed up in a volume anyhow, like a bunch of field-flowers. No need to say that this inclination has not been appreciated by the latest students and publishers of his art. "Fet and T'ùtchev" stand with many modern critics as "Pùshkin and L'èrmontov" (sometimes higher!), and every one of their words is, to use the Russian colloquialism, "ranged within the line."

And now, my patient reader, good-bye—till we meet, I hope, in the Second Volume, over many intricate, startling, or simply fascinating creations of our modern men and women poets.

See this joy of sparkling morning,
See this light the day adorning,
See this sapphire vault;
See these birds in sunshine twirling,
See these happy flocks returning,
See the brooks exult—

See them with the willows blended,
See these tears from twigs suspended,
See the green new-born;
See the mountains, see the valleys,
See the bees and moths on sallies,
Hear this Nature's horn! . . .

Dawns that chase the midnight flying,
Silent village gently sighing,
Sleepless night's warm wing;
Dark and heat my chamber filling—
All around pulsating, thrilling—
See—it is the spring!

— ⏑ — | — ⏑ — | — ⏑
⏑ ⏑ — ⏑ ⏑

In the steppe cruel wind skirleth,
Speeding furiously.
A snow hillock, alone, whirleth,
Coiling curiously.

Round the low oaken cross whistles
Blizzard cheerlessly.
Quick grey hare of the steppe bristles,
Flying fearlessly.

— ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ —
— ⏑ — ⏑

What an evening! The rill
Speeds and splashes,
And the nightingale her trill
Skyward flashes.
Golden crescent's glimmer flows
Through the meadows;
In the ditch the water shows
Willows, shadows. . . .

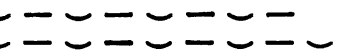
⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑
⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ —

'Twas very late last night.[1] I walked, and looked in wonder
Up at the scarlet-golden height.
I failed to guess: what was it yonder—
The sunset ling'ring there to ponder,
Or early sunrise daring light?

As if in sudden sleep, silently and sedately
The Northern Capital did bend,
Entranced, and yet the same—proud, dignified, and stately;
And o'er her magnitude, inspired, determinately,
Pale Night like a clairvoyant went.

I hardly could believe, that, o'er the waters gliding,
My eyes discerned with perfect ease
Whose ships far out in bay were at their anchors riding;
While under them, in their reflections clear abiding,
Their colours drooped untouched by breeze.

Believe me, South doth never in his embraces burning
Caress such nights—so naked, voluptuously yearning—
As doth our North in summer-tide!



Thy dear old mother could last night
Declare our company most pleasing:
She was quite naughty, shrewdly bright,
Our conduct being most appeasing.

When o'er the spectacles would glide
On us her glance, mischief-preventive,
It always met on left and right
Our eyes, most ardently attentive;

Sideways to each other we sat,
Well by the carpet-square divided
And listening to her mocking chat,
Which never once in wit subsided;

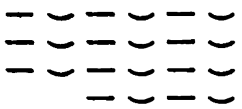
With humour filled, we, in our stead,
Smiled without strain, without pretending;
While in the mirror o'er her head
Our glances met, all-understanding!

Sᴇᴀᴛ thee close to this old willow.
What designs around its hollow,
Twisting deep into the bark!
And, below, the wavelets follow
Streams of quivering glass that swallow
Golden sunrays' flash and spark.

Glossy branches stately throwing
Themselves o'er the bank—a glowing,
Green, and graceful waterfall.
Slender, pointed leaves are strowing,
Needle-like, the water flowing,
Scarring it amongst them all.

In this glass of wavelets racing,
I with jealous eyes am tracing
The reflection of my fate:
There thy pride looks less menācing,
And I tremble—happy, facing
Features that in waves vibrate.

THE MOUNTAIN SPRING



You remember how the spring
Down the cliff did run and ring,
How the beams did always cling
To it, swinging?
How the forest in the rear,
Motley, stood against the clear
Summit snow, where starry sphere
Lights was flinging?

Then the spring grew shallow, dry,
Hid in mountain, fain to die,
Leaving ruddy silt to lie
On the gravel;
And I, yearning, tried for long,
Stones and shady nooks among,
Secret sources of its song
To unravel.

Vainly! . . . But, there came a clang,
Thunder through the mountains rang! . . .
To my feet I nimbly sprang—
Roof was crashing—
And, down from the cliff, behold!—
Spirting through the granite cold,
Hung the spring, strong as of old,
Seething, flashing!

NEVER[2]

⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ } *varying*
⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — } *in order.*

I WOKE, and stretched my stiffened arms. A coffin!—
A coffin lid above me poised. . . . In anguish
I call for help. . . . Yes, those pains I remember
That I went through at death. Yet, now awake,
I shift the crumbled wood as easily as cobwebs,
Arise through it from out my mouldy dwelling,
And stand, as blinded by the snowy light.
The vault is open! This is doubtless, real.
I see the snow. No doors the entrance bar.
Home will I speed! How great will be the wonder! . . .
I know the park; I cannot miss my way.
But, oh, how strange to me its new appearance!
I run through snowdrifts. Lifeless, aged branches
Towards the ether stretch their darkling tips.
But neither trace nor sound; and all around is silent,
As if 'twas Death's world centred round me here.
And here's the house: a sight of desolation! . . .
My arms droop down, in utter stupefaction.
The village sleeps 'neath silent sheets of snow,
And not a path around it in the vastness.
Yes, so it is! . . . There o'er the distant mount
I recognize the church, its bell-tower standing lonely,
Its outlines marked against the cloudless sky,
In snow-dust clad—like wanderer caught by Death.
No winter birds, no moths upon the snow.
I grasp it all: the earth has long been frozen! . . .

Then, why should breath still in my body be?
On earth with what is my mind in connection?
And what can justify at all my being here?
Nowhere to go! No one to be embraced,
Where time in vastness e'en has lost itself!
O Death, come back! Deign to accept again
What's left of life's untimely fatal burden.
And thou, the frozen corpse of earth, fly on
And bear my corpse into eternity.

— ⏑ — ⏑
— ⏑ — ⏑
— ⏑ —

Dims the dreaming;
Comes the gleaming,
Melts the night.
Lucid, sprightly,
Spring shines lightly
In the height.

Ease and splendour
Of the tender
Wings that rise;
Spheres of feeling,
Hope and kneeling
To the skies.

Aspiration,
Exaltation,
Prayer pronounce.
Joyous soaring. . . .
Man, thy warring
I renounce!

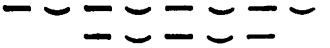
THE PAGE COMPLAINS

They all say my voice is mellow,
That my hair shines like a halo,
And that I am fair;
That I'm proud—the little fellow!—
Lord! 'tis hard to bear.

They foretell that luck will flying
Come to me. . . . They're babbling, sighing—
God knows what about!
And they know not of my crying
Livelong nights throughout.

"He's a child!"—and they caress me;
"He's a child!"—they kiss me, bless me,
And they will not see
That they arouse me, they oppress me,
That they torture me!

Kiss I would—but courage flies me;
I would whisper—something ties me,
And I do not move. . . .
Yet, for long love's passion tries me—
Oh, I love, I love! . . .[3]



Whisper, rustle, breath abated,
Nightingale's clear trill;
Silver, glimmer, gentle heaving
Of the dreamy rill.

Midnight's light-and-shadow ranges—
Shadows interlace;
Fascination, magic changes
On the loved one's face.

O'er the cloudless, amber laces,
Rosy veils are drawn;
Kisses, blissful tears, embraces—
And the dawn! the dawn!

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS

REFERRING TO THE TRANSLATED POETRY

KRYLÒV. (*Pages* 20–28.)

1. This is the only way to say this phrase in English, and two touches are lost in it: Krylòv says "A neighbour (asked) his neighbour," сосѣдъ сосѣда, which conveys the idea that they were good neighbours. The remaining words in this phrase are звалъ откýшать, meaning literally "invited to eat"; but the verb is used in its national form, with a syllable of nuance which gives it an additional touch of cordiality and suggests some extra treat: in this case the meaning of the fable is illustrated by the fashion in Krylòv's days to keep home-trained choirs and musicians.

2. Krylòv conveys this idea by a saying—Кто въ лѣсъ, кто по дровá—which literally means: "some ran to fetch the wood from the shed, and some to cut it in the forest."

3. Krylòv applies here not the regular word for monkey, обезьянa, but the homely slang, мартышка, which is much more in use in ordinary speech and conveys something of the funny nature of the little beast. It is derived from the name Мартынъ, Martin, but is not applied in its feminine form to any other creature, human or animal. Мартышка is the monkey's very own knick-name.

4. The adjective косолáпый which always goes in Russian with "Mishka" (Michael, parallel to Teddy) means *foot-squinting:* it indicates the turned-in position of a bear's feet which causes his clumsy manner of walking.

5. Pug dog is in Russian мопсъ; but Krylòv uses the contemptuous form of the word, мóська.

6. This colloquialism may convey the one Krylòv is

using, which means, literally, people apt to loiter about with their mouths gaping.

7. In Russian грамотéй; this is a term belonging to the simple folk's speech: it is full of due respect for any one who can read (грáмота means the knowledge of reading and writing), while Krylòv makes fun of those who revel in their bookish refinement to the extent of losing common sense.

8. This term is amply explained in the article about Krylòv, pp. 8 and 9.

9. This fable alludes to the position of a writer in Russia, the Cat standing for censorship.

10. Uhà, уха—is one of the national Russian soups, being a dish for the fast: it is a strong fish-broth, made of various kinds of fresh-water fish. It is a great favourite with all classes of the population (although the monastic clergy get so tired of it, that there is a joke about the existence of "archbishop's chicken-uhà"—which, of course, takes the fasting-quality right out of it!); Krylòv has adequately made use of it, laughing at superfluous kindness. Demyàn and Fòka are popular Christian names amongst the peasantry; the expression "Demyàn's uhà" has become a standard allegory for over-done hospitality, all over the Russian land.

11. This line contains one of the national Russian verbs of caressiveness: лáститься; another two, mostly used together and equally untranslatable, are хóлить и лелѣять.

12. The Russian idiom is души́ не чáять, which conveys the idea of such an extreme affection, that one's own soul is forgotten in its midst.

13. The Russian parallel is "my light," мой свѣтъ; a folk expression of affection, but often applied with humour.

JUKÒVSKI. (*Pages* 52–62.)

1. This gutter-poet's rhyme had to be applied here out of necessity. The Russian adjectives derived from кровь, "blood"—кро́вный and крова́вый—have never acquired the strange distasteful colouring either of "bloody" or of "gory," and sound simple and serious.

2. Налóй—the special brocaded table, with ikons, crowns etc. on it, which is placed in the centre of the church for the wedding ceremony; the couple is led by the priest three times round it. Hence the good-humoured expression about the people whose marriage had not been sanctioned by the Church: "They were wedded round an old willow!"—вкругъ ракúтова кустá—instead of вкругъ налóя.

3. A pretty old Russian word for living-room, свѣтлúца, which means a place full of light.

4. Not the ordinary adjective for tender (нѣжный), but умúльный (which can be also used with a touch of humour); the noun, умилéніе, means grave, deeply touching tenderness.

5. Svetlàna's heart has a beautiful old adjective attached to it in Russian, meaning "one of supernatural knowledge" —вѣщій; вѣдать=is "to know" in Old Slavonic, very much in use until now.

6. Попъ, a common word for priest; see *The Russians and their Language*, p. 208.

7. It should be really "thunderstormy"—a very much beloved Russian adjective, грóзный, across which we shall come in this book several times; thus the reader will, perhaps, see its place in our speech. It is explained in *The Russians and their Language*, pp. 131, 132.

8. Here, as usual in Russian poetry, it is not the ordinary word for lips, гýбы, but the old poetic and biblical term устá.

9. There is a "ringing" adverb in this phrase in Russian, голосúсто, derived from гóлосъ, voice.

PÙSHKIN. (*Pages* 109–125.)

1. Two untranslatable touches in this line: the vigorous "syllable of nuance" attached to the verb to feast, *за*пируемъ, which adds much movement to it; and на простóрѣ! See *The Russians and their Language*, pp. 25-27.

2. Pùshkin uses here the word громáды, meaning, literally, "enormities" which we often apply to huge buildings. Towards the end of p. 112 he says, in a similar way, "the

smoke and thunder of thy "solidity," or "fundamentality" —which is impossible in English, but a fine, strong word in Russian: твоей твердыни дымъ и громъ.

3. I don't think that many lines, in translating poetry, had so much useless attempting, hard trying, researching, debating and wondering concentrated on them as this line had! But all remained in vain, for the mere reason that there is no term in English which would mean—without being vulgar or slang—холостáя пирýшка! In Russian this adjective and noun mean a harmless, but a boisterous, happy, gathering of young bachelors round a punch-bowl (or any inspiring liquors!). To me, the suggested (and insisted upon) "rakkle" sounds odd and vulgar, while Pùshkin is only realistic, true to the subject.

4. Here he uses a lovely, sparkling Russian variety for the word rejoices: ликýетъ, instead of the ordinary рáдуется.

5. In Russian it is "summer red," like "a red girl," "the red sun"—all of them terms of admiration.

6. The lent is preceded in Russia by the мáсляница, "the butter-week": no meat is allowed by the Church then—but any amount of fish, caviar, cream, butter, wines, etc., etc.! The main feature of these seven days are the blinў, блины́: large, light, yeast-grown pan-cakes, not sweet ones, but eaten with caviar, anchovy, thick cream and all sorts of tasty salt things. One grows quite mad on them! You are invited "to blinў," на блины́, to three or four different places, daily; they form a meal in themselves, taking place of all other meals, and must be a remnant of some heathen custom. There is a great deal of jollity and (to various extents) drinking going on with the blinў, and sledge-driving, and all sorts of fun. It is the week of merry-making in the year; but cases of sudden death take place too!—because the "sport" is overdone by those old-fashioned men who will compete not merely in eating so many blinў per day (up to 10 is an average for a schoolboy or healthy woman, and men consume much more!)—but so many "¼-yards" of blinў, measuring them as they are piled up on a plate! . . .

7. Раздóлье—another word for простóръ.

8. Долъ—a poetic variety for ground, земля́.

9. Лѣшій—a special "forest spright" whose appearance you are invited to imagine on the strength of a folk-definition: he has "one nostril and no back"!

10. Русáлка—not merely a folk-lore figure, but, like the лѣшій and the домовóй, a mythological conception of the bulk of our peasantry: they firmly believe that the rusàlki lure young men into the depths of the lakes and rivers, that they splash and play about on the shoals and then come out and sit in the branches of the trees, drying and combing their long hair. . . . In view of such proceedings, the peasants of some remote villages have been known sometimes to leave chemises hanging out on the trees for the night! . . .

11. "Sea uncle" in Russian: дя́дька ихъ морскóй. See *The Russians and their Language*, p. 157.

12. Here is "thunderstormy" again—one looking like thunder clouds.

13. The hero holds on to the wicked dwarf-wizard's beard which is dozens of yards long, till the dwarf is tired out and obliged to descend, after which Ruslàn cuts his beard off and packs him into a bag behind his saddle.

14. Bàba-Yagà is the old wicked witch of the national fairy tales: she lives in a dense forest, in a hut which stands on chicken-legs and turns round and round, to face an intruder. Bàba-Yagà has her outings in the nights, when she mounts her mortar which goes trit-trot of its own accord; she sweeps away the traces behind her (whether on the ground or on the air!) with a broom.

15. "From behind them," stands here for the Russian adverb невидúмкою which does not exist in English: it is a poetic word (a noun in the instrumental case) which means one who cannot be seen; it is another item of fairy tales, because there exists a special cap, шáпка невидúмка which makes you invisible whilst you have it on.

16. I find that the Russian домовóй, a friendly house-spright who takes care of homesteads and especially of the horses belonging to them, corresponds to "Burlow Beanie" appearing in the book of Old English ballads.

17. The original says "to spin"; but I have taken the liberty of yielding to the demands of rhyming, because, in the following lines, Pùshkin introduces the second of the three sisters as a lover of weaving.

18. The only made-up rhyme which could be worked in here to go with "tsarìtsa" was "befits a"! It makes a Russian translator feel simply vehement! With us, "tsarìtsa" rhymes with greatest ease to all the words that go with it in this tale (see Introduction, p. xxxvi).

19 and 20. So do the царь (tsar) and богатырь in all the cases except nomin. sing. To make the "Tsar" rhyme here with the "bright as a star"—a substitute for bogatyr'—it is necessary in this case, to pronounce "tsar" in the usual (wrong) English way, and not with a soft *r* as we do in Russian.

The fact that "husband tsar" stands here for *батюшка* царь (the only logical translation) once more proves the senselessness of the usual manner of translating this word as "little father"! See *The Russians and their Language*, pp. 50, 51.

21. "Gallant son" stands here for that same *bogatyr'*, богатырь. Here the latter rhymes in Russian with "*towards the end of September*" which is lost in translating! Those who have seen the fascinating Russian editions of Pùshkin's fairy tales illustrated in the national style by the artist Bilìbin (these can be found in England now) will, therefore, understand why one of the best coloured plates represents the young tsar', halting on his walking, is listening to the talk of the three sisters *in the winter*.

22. In an Old Russian way, the feast is called here пиръ честно́й: an adjective meaning honourable, whilst че́стный means honest.

23. This is not a licence of translation! In the original it is арши́нъ, the Russian measure corresponding to the English yard—just a few inches shorter.

24. "Matchmaker deceiver" stands for съ сва́тьей ба́бой бабари́хой; in Russian the word "deceiver" is not there, but the ugly name Babarìha, invented by Pùshkin for the fun of rhyme and unattractiveness of meaning, reminds the

national distrust for the female matchmakers who used to be indispensable factors in marriage affairs even in the last century (with the uneducated classes); thinking only of their commission-fee, they very often told so many lines that the wedded would find themselves in a "dead-wedlock"! In this tale the matchmaker would be, naturally, furious as her advice was never asked for. Later on in the tale the malice of these three females causes many things to happen —which, after all, end in complete happiness of the Tsar' Saltan, his wife and their son.

KOL'TZOV. (*Pages* 140–150.)

1 and 3. "Bold adventurer" is the nearest English to the мóлодцу разудáлому and удалóй башкой. The latter contains a Tartar word for "head," which has become a very sharp colloquialism.

2. The enormous stone-and-clay stoves in the Russian peasant's huts form a kind of a shelf of the size of a large bed: being always warm (over the deep, long oven) they are the most beloved sleeping-place where the old, the children, and the sick are given the first chance to rest (other members of the family sleep on benches, if there is no room for everyone on the stove). Лежáть на печи́, "to lie on the stove," is the usual expression among the peasants about the lazy ones.

4. Тоскá—see *The Russians and their Language*, pp. 91, 92, 93.

5. Прости́—the typical Russian expression for goodbye, which can be explained only at length. *The Russians and their Language*, pp. 187, 188, 189.

6. "White world" is the national caressive epithet for the world.

7. The ancient word басурмáнъ used to mean every kind of alien, when the mass of our people used to think that all non-Russians were heathen. The adjective here applied to the foe's brew conveys this sweeping conception: басурмáнскій.

L'ÈRMONTOV. (*Pages* 177–208.)

1. Kazbèk, Казбекъ, is one of the two highest snow peaks of the Caucasian mountain range; the other one is Elborus.

2. Daryàl, Дарьялъ, is the deep and narrow cleft along which the river Tèrek precipitates itself down the northern slopes. This cleft is the only route—a narrow road lurking along the edge of the steep river bank which is overhung by the rocks from above. The accommodations of travelling are still almost primitive; but the beauty of the scenery can never be forgotten when once seen.

3. A powerful biblical word stands here for the "call of the waters": *глаго́лу* водъ его внима́ли.

4. Chinàra, чина́ра, is a big, shady tree of the kind of sycamore.

5. Aràgva, Арагва, is the name of a river in Grùzia. See footnote on p. 79.

6. Zurnà, зурна́, is a national wind instrument, somewhat like the bagpipe.

7. L'èrmontov applies here just one adjective, вла́жный: literally, "a moist look," describing the nature of a shining, coquettish glance.

8. Благода́тный—an adjective rooted in the Old Slavonic бла́го, goodness; it is constantly used to convey elation and blissful purity.

9. Old Slavonic again: незри́мой силой=by an "unseen" power.

10. "Words *he knew*" had to come in to give some idea of the ever-present adjective *родны́мъ* языко́мъ. As before, see *The Russians and their Language*, p. 59.

11. The adjective кова́рный means the highest degree of wicked artfulness; "malicious" might be a nearer translation, but it is not always equivalent to кова́рный.

12. Here is the same adjective again: L'èrmontov applies it to the dream, the vision, by which the Demon was arousing the feelings of the young man—Его кова́рною мечто́ю лука́вый Демонъ возмущалъ. By the way, the adjective

defining the Demon, лукáвый, is the biblically-poetic variety of "cunning," хи́трый.

13. Tamàra is called here невѣ́ста (fiancée). See *The Russians and their Language*, p. 85.

14. There is an Old Slavonic powerful noun, кáра, in this phrase, which had to be expressed by "Heaven's thunderbolt."

15. The Old Slavonic variety for cheeks: ланúты, instead of the modern щéки.

16. Тоскá—again!

17. L'èrmontov makes here a magnificent word for "sails" —вѣтри́ла: it sounds as if it were cut out of the wind itself! (вѣтеръ=wind). One never hears it anywhere else, the usual word is парусá; yet it sounds exquisitely simple.

18. An ancient, poetical word for "dawn": денни́ца, instead of the ordinary заря́. (No. 19 is omitted by mistake.)

20. The ancient, yet quite modern (as usual) variety for "seemed": мни́лось, instead of казáлось. The first conveys the idea of something that one *thinks* to be there (мнить is the ancient form for "think").

21. I applied here "hellish" to convey the adjective лукáвый, which is the usual epithet to go with fiends. See the end of the note 12.

22. Тоскá—again!

23. There is a slight rephrasing here, necessitated by the abbreviation.

24. Kazbèk is often called the Tsar' of the Caucasus, as L'èrmontov calls it here, although Elborus is higher.

25. A Caucasian string instrument.

26. Тоскá—again!

27. A delightfully poetic variety of this verb: пріосѣни́лъ, instead of огради́лъ or защити́лъ. The root of this word, the ancient noun сѣнь, is the one which Pùshkin uses in the last stanza of his "Liberty" (p. 110): сѣнь закóна, the сѣнь of the Law—which is but feebly reflected in the "Law's protective entry"; but none of us could find any equivalent in English!

28. The biblically-poetic form of "hitherto": понúнѣ.

29. The same shade of variety again: гордыня instead of гóрдость.

30. Въ умилéньи; see notes on Jukòvski: 10.

31. Лукáвый again: an adjective meaning hellish cunning.

32. A most Russian noun is unavoidably omitted here—упоéніе: it means "one's drinking oneself full of——"; we apply it to joy, love, rapture, fray, power. . . . It means boundless self-abandonment, and the Demon uses it to define the nature of his passion.

33. Some rephrasing here, due to abbreviation.

34. This line contains in Russian the noun рóпоть which means that kind of "murmur" which is an expression of revolt.

35. Here is the verb derived from toskà: я тоскýю.

36. The poison of his "kiss" would sound to me so hopelessly plain! In Russian it is "kiss," but—not its modern form: the Old Slavonic лобзáніе, instead of поцѣлýй. So it is eleven lines below.

37. Peri is a legendary female variety of a Demon: a punished angel.

38. "Affection" is the only thing possible here: in Russian it is устá (Old Slavonic for lips) родны́е (again—see *The Russians and their Language*, p. 59).

39. Even the glen is called by a variety of the adjective роднóй (you can't go away from it in Russian!)—цвѣты́ роди́маго ущéлья.

40. Упоéнье again. See note 32.

41. Some abbreviation here.

42. Poetic Old Slavonic variety, for "hope": упова́нье, instead of надéжда.

43. Old Slavonic again: брéнныя, meaning "those that will fall to ashes."

44. One of the intensified adjectives is applied here to the ice—вѣковѣ́чные: "eternally eternal," as it were.

45. Duma, дýма, is one of the two nouns we have for "thought": дýма is more poetic than мысль.

T'ÙTCHEV. (*Pages* 222–227.)

1. A grand old verb, допря́нуть, conveying the idea of a tremendous leap.

2. It is not the ordinary "deep" here, but its very sonorous, poetic and biblical variety: пучи́на.

3. Besides the definition "not accidental," there comes in this line the adjective кро́вный, one of the two that are derived from кровь, blood. It conveys the grave idea of relationship (see the first note referring to Jukòvski).

4. "Lightly-sleeping" stands here for the very Russian word чу́ткій which is explained in *The Russians and their Language* on pp. 18 to 22.

5. "The past" is here the essentially Russian term which, literally, means "*The been.*"

6. In English we have to use the same word "dream" for three different Russian ones: сонъ (what we dream in our sleep) and мечта́ or грёза (what we visualize in wakefulness); the last is particularly poetic, and T'ùtchev applies it here. But—it just occurred to me—that the first word, сонъ, also means in Russian "the sleep"! We say: "I saw a sleep," when you say: "I saw a dream." These whims of languages are perfectly bewitching!

7. Again, as with L'èrmontov, the word ду́ма (duma) here, and not мысль, although both mean "a thought."

8. Again—просторъ (prostòr)!

9. "Forewards and backwards" expresses best, I think, the two Russian nouns which do not exist in English: прибо́й и отбо́й. They nearly always go together because they mean the "surges beating up to" and the "surges beating off." Analyzing their structure, they literally mean the "up-beat and off-beat" of the sea.

10. The Russian is "*deaf* autumn"; we very often apply this adjective, глухо́й, when speaking of dull, dreary, monotonous, unresponsive times or places: "a deaf district," "a deaf nook," "a deaf night."

11. The poet uses here the usual verb "to green," зелене́ть: "the young leaf greens" is the first line, literally.

We have similar verbs about all colours: the snow "whitens," the pitfall "blackens," the skies "blue (?)," etc.—in the *in*transitive meaning; the transitive forms exist as well.

12. I thought "legions" would be the best; the very Russian тьма (meaning also pitch-darkness) is often picturesquely applied to uncountable numbers.

TOLSTÒY. (*Pages* 252–256.)

1. The Russian for "legend" is a picturesque word, повѣрье, meaning "a thing which is believed."

2. "Goodness" is expressed here not by the modern Russian word доброта́, but by the Old Slavonic бла́гость, which is always applied in a gravely-poetic sense.

3. This is the poem which is mentioned in the Introduction (p. xxii) as one that would *not* stand rhyming in English without fading in its freshness!

4. In Russian it is "the hours of тоска́ and anger." Behold "toskà" again!

5. We say "a mountain-feast"—пиръ горо́й.

6. This quaint metre is indicated here as being at the foundation of the poem; its Old Russian character allows it in the original some swaying off the regularity, but following those subtle national twists would only make it odd in English; putting a stress on the fourth strong beat of each line brings forward the national Russian intonations.

7. The national for "if," ка́бы, instead of е́сли, throughout.

8. The Old Russian again—вспять instead of наза́дъ.

9. In original it is бра́тцы, brothers, with the national *sociable* twist to it. Being impossible in English, it is better conveyed by "friends."

10. "Red wenches"—a jolly, sociable, national term.

11. A very Russian noun of the peasant's speech, meaning a fine young woman, молоди́ца; while *all* wedded women are called simply ба́бы. See *The Russians and their Language*, pp. 126 to 130.

12. An ancient term for the officials, прика́зный, which

literally means "the orderly" and which was used before Peter the Great invented "чинóвникъ."

13. I thought it would be clearer to rephrase this line which runs in Russian—"If we could wear our own coats"; it means the same ideal state of things when no gifts would be required.

Now, since the 14th of March, 1917, the last line has acquired a new value: the formerly unattainable ideal has become a reality! . . .

N'EKRÀSOV. (*Pages* 286–288.)

1. Дýмалъ-гадáлъ—one of those essentially Russian samples of intensifying an idea by doubling it, through adding either a synonym (as in this case), or an adjective derived from the same noun: горе гóрькое, bitter grief; путь дорóженька, travelling; дýмать дýмушку, to think a thought; вóля вóльная, the freedom free, etc.

2. I would be thankful if any one could suggest a better word for the Russian adjective убóгій. "Barren" cannot be always applied where убогій is unreplaceable!

FET. (*Pages* 295–304.)

1. This is Fet's description of our northern White Nights —interesting to compare with the one in Pùshkin's *Bronze Horseman*.

2. I could not possibly explain to my reader what did Fet mean by this title! Nor can I get any suggestion from anyone whom I asked. Nevertheless, the quaint poem is rather interesting in itself as justifying death from the æsthetic point of view. I find, that leaving it *unrhymed* does, strangely enough, more justice to the power of the *rhymed* original.

3. In order to preserve the last line of the original of this poem I had to yield to the usual English rhyme "move—

love." To my mind, *a one syllable rhyme entirely disappears* when the accentuated vowels are different! There are no "spelling"-rhymes in Russian. With us a rhyme is a matter of hearing and not of seeing, and there are even cases when the spelling is subordinated to the sound (слóва—глухóва), or the pronunciation is slightly altered in order to fit the sound of a rhyme (сне́ги—мечтáми), which is just the other way round to what it is in English. But, I am told that what is good for Shelley should be good enough for me!—so I submit.

P.S.—A note is omitted on p. 109, third line from the bottom: Pushkin uses for "rulers" the biblical word владыки, which sounds very powerful; literally, it means "possessors," and is applied, in a poetically-grave sense, to all monarchs, whilst it is also the official term for a Metropolitan.

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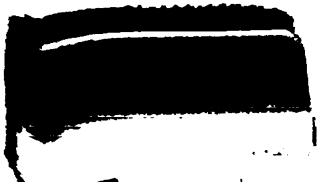
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